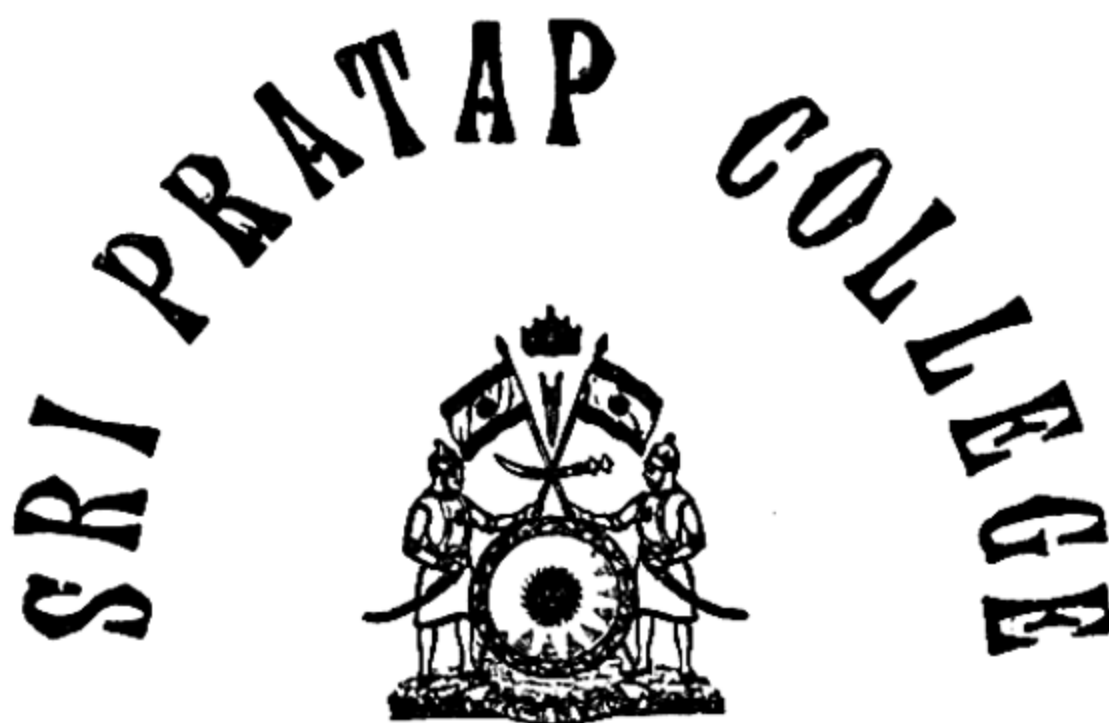


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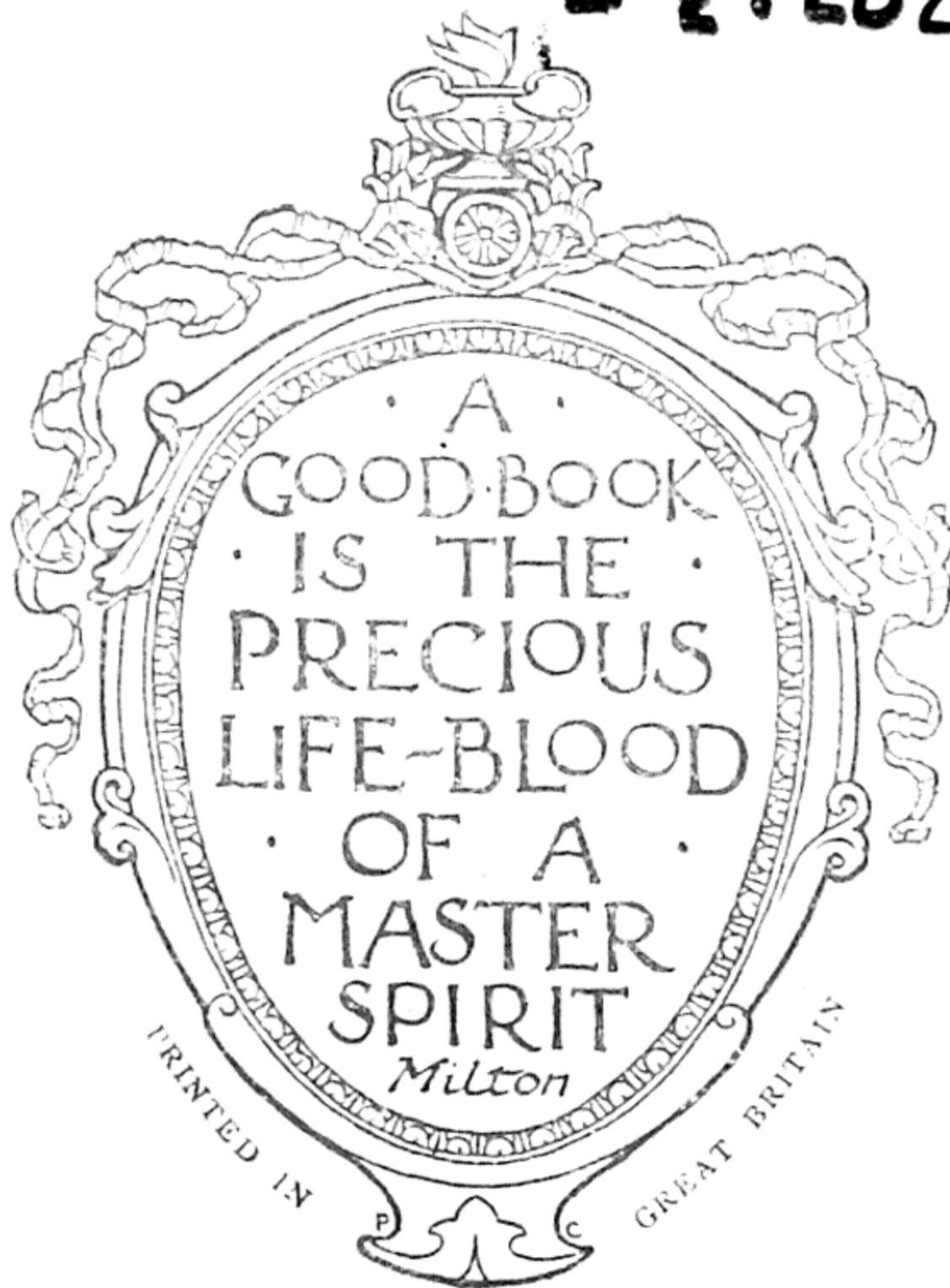


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DOROTHY OSBORNE



SELECTED ENGLISH LETTERS



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JOHN WISHART

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INTRODUCTION

ENGLISH literature is rich in letters. From the fifteenth century to the present time the letters of almost all prominent men have been preserved, and these form a distinct and most delightful branch of literature.

As material for the study of history they have an abiding value. Letters of state reveal the inner history of great national events of the time in which they were written. Historical characters like Anne Boleyn or Sir Francis Bacon, who are but names to most readers, become real persons to those who read their letters. Domestic and friendly letters, too, have a historical value. The little incidents of every-day life, the gossip of the court or of the countryside give an insight into the thoughts and actions of our forefathers such as no amount of description can provide. To read such letters is to enter into the life of days gone by, to accompany the writers in their business and in their pleasure, to know their friends and to look at the world as they knew it through their eyes.

But it is as character portraits that the familiar letters of great men have their most potent charm. A real letter is more than a bundle of news; it is the expression of the writer's nature. All unconsciously while he is thinking only of his letter and

his correspondent, he is drawing a likeness of himself. No two persons will write the same letter. It is impossible to imagine Dr. Johnson, for example, writing the delightful nonsense of Lewis Carroll's letters to his child-friends, or Charles Lamb expressing himself with the stately dignity of Addison. The published works of any author may and probably should reveal little about himself. In his letters he can be personally known; and it is this intimacy, this power that they have of introducing us to our favourite authors and heroes, that makes English letters so attractive.

It is much easier to say what a good letter is not, than what it is. It must not be an essay nor yet a sermon. While it may impart information, its main purpose must not be to educate the receiver; and although it may contain much good advice on conduct this must not be its chief aim. A succession of such letters between equals would destroy the most perfect friendship. A familiar letter, in short, is good, in so far as it approaches the friendly conversation of good talkers. It must be natural, frank and spontaneous, and the less formal it is, the better.

In early days, letter-writing was practically unknown. Paper or other writing material was a scarce commodity, transit was difficult and costly, and the general level of education was not sufficiently high to make it other than a task either to read or to write letters. Thus it comes about that comparatively few earlier than the Paston letters have been

preserved. These letters are most valuable from a historical point of view, and provide information regarding the social life of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries which no historian can neglect. The Elizabethan age, rich as it was in poetry and drama, produced few letters. Even the correspondence of Shakespeare, in whose life and works there is interest enough to make Stratford-on-Avon a shrine for pilgrims the world over, has not been preserved. It was not till the first half of the seventeenth century that Bishop Hall and James Howell raised letter-writing to its proper place as a branch of literature. The latter has been called in clumsy phrase "the father of epistolary literature." In one of his letters he lays down in interesting fashion the principles of letter-writing. Howell was rich in one of the essentials for good letter-writing: he had abundant leisure; for the years of his life which produced the famous letters were spent in confinement as a Royalist prisoner. It is interesting to remember that a far greater work, Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, owed its origin to circumstances somewhat similar.

In the eighteenth century, letter-writing reached its high-water mark. As an art it was thoroughly studied and carefully practised to an extent unknown before or since. Occasionally the art is so obvious that the letters seem artificial and unreal; they show signs of a straining after fine phrases and beautiful descriptions that somehow destroys the atmosphere

of friendliness which familiar letters should create. There is more of the constraining ceremonial politeness of a court than the natural politeness which makes social intercourse easy and pleasant. Where, however, the art is so great as to conceal art, the letters produced reach a level of perfection to which earlier authors could not attain, and which modern writers do not even attempt to emulate.

Conditions of life in the eighteenth century were favourable to the production of good letters. Newspapers were scarce and dear, and news travelled so slowly that letters describing the events of the time would serve much of the purpose fulfilled by newspapers to-day. Cheap postage had not yet been established, and the high cost of carriage tended to prevent the writing of scrappy notes such as nowadays are honoured by the name of letters. Life, too, was much more leisurely than it is now. Letters could only be dispatched as occasion offered; so days might be spent in the production of a single letter.

Opinions will naturally differ regarding the merits of the various letter-writers. Most readers, however, will agree that among the greatest must be included Cowper, Walpole and Lamb. Written in pure and graceful English, Cowper's letters attract by their combination of good sense and gentle humour. Leading a life of complete retirement, he finds in the everyday incidents of country life material for letters of the greatest charm. Walpole's letters, on the other

hand, are attractive for reasons quite different. He was a man of the world, moving in society, and his letters are valuable pictures of social life and character in the eighteenth century. Like Robert Louis Stevenson, Charles Lamb had the power of gaining the affection of his readers. The humour which is found in his essays is even more pronounced in his letters; and this, together with the picture they give of the writer and his friends, makes them of priceless value.

It is a common complaint that letter-writing is to-day a lost art. To a large extent this is true. Letters were never more abundant; but what has been gained in quantity has been lost in quality. For this many causes can be adduced. The introduction of cheap postage, the post-card and the telegraph and the quickening of means of transport, all contribute to the baldness and scrappiness of present-day letters. It is not the aim of this volume to serve as a manual of letter-writing; but if the study of these letters induces even the desire to write better letters it will have justified its existence.

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SELECTED ENGLISH LETTERS

THE PASTON LETTERS (1422-1509)

THE earliest set of English letters which have been preserved are the Paston Letters. They were written or received by members of the Paston family in Norfolk between the years 1422 and 1509. To historians they have great value for the insight they give into the political and domestic life of those early days.

I

In the following letter, written in 1458, Agnes Paston gives her blessing and some good advice to her son John.

*To my well-beloved son, John Paston, be this
delivered in haste.*

SON,

I greet you well, and let you wete that for as much as your brother Clement letteth me wete that ye desire feythfully my blessing—that blessing that

Wete. Know.

I prayed your father to give you the laste day that ever he spake, and the blessing of all saints under heaven, and mine mote come to you all days and times; and think verily none other but that ye have it, and shall have it, with that that I find you kind and willing to the wele of your father's soul and the welfare of your bretheren.

By my conseyle dispose yourself as much as ye may to have less to do in the world; your father said "In little business lyeth much rest." This world is but a thoroughfare, and full of woe; and when we depart therefro, can nought bear with us but our good deeds and ill. And there knoweth no man how soon God will clepe him, and therefor it is good for every creature to be redy. Whom God visiteth him he loveth.

And as for your bretheren, they will, I know, certeynly labor all that in them lyeth for you. Oure Lorde have you in his blessed keeping, body and soule.

Written at Norwyche, the xxix day of Octobyr.

By your mother,

A. P.

II

This is one of the most familiar of the Paston Letters. John Paston was ill in London and his wife could not manage to go to him; but, as will

Wele. Welfare, good.

Clepe. Call.

be seen, his friends took the means which in those days were considered most effective to ensure his recovery.

The date of the letter is 28th September, 1443. The spelling is somewhat modernized.

*To my right worshipful husband, John Paston,
dwellyng in the Inner Temple at London, in haste.*

RIGHT WORSHIPFUL HUSBAND,

I recomaund me to you, desiring heartily to hear of your welfare, thanking God of your amending of the great disease that ye have had; and I thank you for the letter that ye sent me, for by my trowthe, my mother and I were not in hearts ease from the tyme that we wost of your sekenesse, till we woste verily of your amending. My mother behested another image of wax of the weight of you to our Lady of Walsingham, and she sent four nobelys to the four Orders of Friars at Norweche to pray for you, and I have behested to go on pilgrimage to Walsingham and to Saint Leonards for you; by my trowth I had never so heavy a season as I had from the time that I woste of your sekenesse til I woste of your amending, and sith mine heart is in no great ease, ne shall not be till I wot that ye be very hale. Your father and mine was this day se'ennight at Bekelys for a matter of the Prior of Bronholme, and

Mine. William Paston.

he lay at Gerlyston that night and was there till it was nine of the clock, and the tother day. And I sent thither for a gounne, and my mother said that I should have none till I had been there anon and so they could none get.

My father Garneys sent me worde that he should be here the next week and my emme also, and play them with their hawkys, and they should have me home with them; and so God help me I shall escuse me of going thither if I may, for I sopose I shall redelyer have tidings from you here than I should have there. I pray you heartily that ye will wochesaf to sende me a letter as hastely as ye may, if writing be none disease to you, and that ye wollen wochesaf to sende me worde how your sore doth. If I might have had my wille I should have seen you ere this time; I would ye were at home, if it were your ease and your sore might be as well looked to here as it is there, now liefer than a gounne though it were of scarlette.

I pray you if your sore be hol, and so that ye may endure to ride, when my father come to London, that ye will ask leve, and come home when the horse will be sente home again, for I hope ye should be kept as tenderly here as ye be at London. I may none leiseire have to do writing half a quarter as much as I should say to you if I might speak with you. I shall send you another letter as hastely

My father Garneys. Probably her godfather.
Emme. Uncle.

as I may. I thank you that ye would wochesaffe to remember my girdle, and that ye would write to me at the time, for I sopose that writing was non esse to you. Allmighty God have you in his kepyn and send you helth.

Written at Oxenede, in right grete haste, on Saint Mikyllys Even.

Yours,

M. PASTON.

My mother greets you well, and sendyth you God's blessing and hers; and she prayeth you, and I pray you also, that ye be well dyeted of meat and drinke, for that is the greatest helpe that ye may have now to your healthward. Your son fareth well, blessed be God.

III

The following letter was written by Margery Paston to her husband, probably in 1484, the year of Margaret Paston's death. It is interesting to see the amusements of these far-off days, and the full control which a wife had to exercise over her husband's estate in his absence.

To my right worshipful husband, John Paston.

RIGHT WORSHIPFUL HUSBAND, ●

I recomaund me unto you. Please it you to wete that I sent your eldest son to my Lady Morley to have knowledge what sports were husyd in her

house in Kyrstemesse next followyng after the de-
 cease of my lord, her husband; and she said that
 there were none disgysings, nor harping, nor luting
 nor singing nor none lowde dysports, but playing at
 the tables, and chess and cards. Such dysports she
 gave her folkys leave to play and none other.

Your son did her errand ryight well as ye shall
 hear after this. I sent your younger son to the
 Lady Stapleton, and she said according to the Lady
 Morley's saying in that, and as she had seen husyd
 in places of worship theras she hathe been.

I pray you that ye will asur to you some man at
 Caster to keep your botry, for the man that ye left
 with me will not take upon him to breve dayly as
 ye commandyt. He saith he hath not usyd to give
 a rekening neither of bred nor ale till at the wekys
 end; and he saith he wot well that he should not
 condenyth, and therefore I suppose he shall not abyd,
 and I trow ye shall be fain to purvey another man
 for Symond, for ye are never the nearer a wise man
 for him.

I am sorry that ye shall not be at home for
 Crystemes. I pray you that ye will come as soon as
 ye may. I shall think myself half a wedow, because
 ye shall not be at home. God have you in His
 keping.

Written on Crestemas Evyn,

By your,
 M. P.

Places of worship. Families of distinction.
Breve. To make up accounts. *Condenyth.* Givesatisfaction.

IV

This letter must have been written about the beginning of the year 1455. It tells about the recovery of King Henry VI from the madness that had affected him for more than a year.

To my well-beloved cosyn, John Paston, be this delivered.

RIGHT WELL-BELOVED COSYN,

I recomaund me to you, letting you wite such tidings as we have.

Blessed be God, the King is well amended, and hath been since Cristemesday, and on Saint John's day comaunded his almoner to ride to Canterbury with his ofrying and comaunded his secretarie to offre at Saint Edwards.

And on the Moneday after noon the Queen came to him and brought my Lord Prince with her. And then he asked what the Prince's name was and the Queen told him Edward; and then he held up his hands and thanked God thereof. And he said he never knew til that time, nor wist not what was said to him, nor wist not where he had been while he had been sick til now. And he asked who was godfathers, and the Queen told him and he was well apaid.

And she told him that the Cardinal was dede, and

The Cardinal. John Kemp, Cardinal Archbishop of Canterbury and Chancellor.

he said he never knew thereof til that time; and he said one of the wisest Lords in this land was dede.

And my Lord of Wynchester and my Lord of Saint John's were with him on the morrow after Tweltheday and he spake to them as well as ever he did; and when they came out they wept for joy. And he saith he is in charitie with all the world, and so he would all the Lords were.

And now he sayeth matins of Our Lady and eve-song, and heareth his Masse devoutly; and Richard shall tell you more tidings by mouth.

I pray you recomaund me to my Lady Morley, and to Master Prior, and to my Lady Felbrigge, and to my Lady Hweningham, and to my cosyn your mother and to my cosyn your wife.

Written at Greenewich on Thursday after Twelfth-day

By your cosyn,

EDMUND CLERE.

JAMES HOWELL (1594-1666)

IN 1655, James Howell published *Familiar Letters, Domestic and Foreign*, and was thus one of the first to establish letter-writing as a distinct branch of English Literature. Most of these letters were written from the Fleet Prison, in which the author was a Royalist prisoner from 1643 to 1651.

In the following letter he gives the original story of Browning's *Pied Piper of Hamelin*.

FLEET, 1st Octob., 1643.

SIR,

I saw such prodigious things daily don these few yeers, that I had resolv'd with myself to give over wondering at anything: yet a passage happed'd this week, that forc'd me to wonder once more, because it is without parallel. It was, that som odd fellows went skulking up and down London streets, and with figs and reasons allur'd little children, and so pourloyn'd them away from their parents, and carried them a ship-board for beyond sea, wher, by cutting their hair, and other divises, they so disguis'd them, that their parents could not know them.

This made me think upon that miraculous passage in Hamelen, a town in Germany, which I hop'd to have pass'd through when I was in Hamburgh, had we return'd by Holland; which was thus (nor would I relate it unto you, were not there som ground of truth for it). The said town of Hamelen was annoyed with rats and mice; and it chanc'd that a pied-coated piper came thither, who covenanted with the chief burgers for such a reward if he could free them quite from the said vermin, nor would he demand it, till a twelve-month and a day after: The agreement being made, he began to play on his pipes, and all the rats, and the mice, followed him to a great lough hard by, where they all perish'd; so the

town was infested no more. At the end of the year, the pied piper return'd for his reward, the burgers put him off with slightings, and neglect, offring him som small matter which he refusing, and staying som dayes in the town, one Sunday morning at high-masse, when most people were at church, he fell to play on his pipes, and all the children up and down follow'd him out of the town, to a great hill not far off, which rent in two, and open'd, and let him and the children in, and so closed up again; this hap-pen'd a matter of two hundred and fifty years since [A.D. 1643-250=1393 A.D.]; and in that town, they date their bills and bonds, and other instruments in law, to this day the yeer of the going out of their children: besides, ther is a great piller of stone at the foot of the said hill, whereon this story is engraven.

No more now, for this is enough in conscience for one time; So I am your most affectionate servitor

J. H.

SIR JOHN SUCKLING (1609-42)

SIR JOHN SUCKLING, poet, soldier and courtier, is now remembered only as a writer of songs and ballads. The following letter "to a nobleman" has been described as a perfect specimen of finished

courtliness. It was probably written while the poet was serving in Germany under Gustavus Adolphus.

MY NOBLE LORD,

Your humble servant had the honour to receive from your hand a letter, and had the grace upon the sight of it to blush; I but then found my own negligence, and but now have the opportunity to ask pardon for it. We have ever since been upon a march, and the places we have come to, have afforded rather blood than ink; and of all things, sheets have been the hardest to come by, especially those of paper. If these few lines shall have the happiness to kiss your hand, they can assure you that he who sent them knows no one to whom he owes more obligation than to your Lordship, and to whom he would more willingly pay it; and that it must be no less than necessity itself that can hinder him from often presenting it. Germany has no whit altered me; I am still the humble servant of my Lord that I was; and when I cease to be so, I must cease to be

JOHN SUCKLING.

DOROTHY OSBORNE (1627-95)

THE letters of Dorothy Osborne to Sir William Temple were written in the seventeenth century, during the years following the Civil War. Apart from the insight they give into the life of the people in this period, they introduce us to a charming young lady, witty and tender, full of womanly sympathy and sound common sense.

The account given here* of her daily life has been described as "Like a gust of fresh country air, clearing away the mist of time, and enabling one to see Dorothy at Chicksands quite clearly."

At length all obstacles were overcome and Dorothy was married to Sir William Temple in 1654.

SIR,

I have been reckoning up how many faults you lay to my charge in your last letter, and I find I am severe, unjust, unmerciful and unkind. Oh me, how should one do to mend all these! 'Tis work for an age, and 'tis to be feared I shall be so old before I am good, that 'twill not be considerable to anybody but myself whether I am so or not. I say nothing of the pretty humour you fancied me in, in your dream, because 'twas but a dream. . . . Well, dreams are pleasant things to people whose humours are so;

*Reprinted by kind permission of His Honour Judge Parry

but to have the spleen, and to dream upon't, is a punishment I would not wish my greatest enemy. I seldom dream, or never remember them, unless they have been so sad as to put me into such disorder as I can hardly recover when I am awake, and some of those I am confident I shall never forget.

You ask me how I pass my time here. I can give you a perfect account not only of what I do for the present, but of what I am likely to do this seven years if I stay here so long. I rise in the morning reasonably early, and before I am ready I go round the house till I am weary of that, and then into the garden till it grows too hot for me. About ten o'clock I think of making me ready, and when that's done I go into my father's chamber, from thence to dinner, where my cousin Molle and I sit in great state in a room and at a table that would hold a great many more. After dinner we sit and talk till Mr. B. comes in question, and then I am gone. The heat of the day is spent in reading or working, and about six or seven o'clock I walk out into a common that lies hard by the house, where a great many young wenches keep sheep and cows, and sit in the shade singing of ballads. I go to them and compare their voices and beauties to some ancient shepherdesses that I have read of, and find

Cousin Molle. Mr. Henry Molle, Fellow of King's College, Cambridge.

Mr. B. A gentleman named Bennet who wished Dorothy to marry him.

a vast difference there: but, trust me, I think these are as innocent as those could be. I talk to them, and find they want nothing to make them the happiest people in the world but the knowledge that they are so. Most commonly, when we are in the midst of our discourse, one looks about her, and spies her cows going into the corn, and then away they all run as if they had wings at their heels. I, that am not so nimble, stay behind; and when I see them driving home their cattle, I think 'tis time for me to retire too. When I have supped, I go into the garden, and so to the side of a small river that runs by it, where I sit down and wish you with me (you had best say this is not kind neither). In earnest, 'tis a pleasant place, and would be much more so to me if I had your company. I sit there sometimes till I am lost with thinking; and were it not for some cruel thoughts of the crossness of our fortunes that will not let me sleep there, I should forget that there were such a thing to be done as going to bed.

Since I writ this, my company is increased by two, my brother Harry and a fair niece, the eldest of my brother Peyton's daughters. She is so much a woman that I am almost ashamed to say I am her aunt; and so pretty, that, if I had any design to gain a servant, I should not like her company; but I have none, and therefore shall endeavour to keep her here as long as I can persuade her father to spare her,

Servant. Admirer.

for she will easily consent to it, having so much of my humour (though it be the worst thing in her) as to like a melancholy place and little company. My brother John is not come down again, nor am I certain when he will be here. He went from London into Gloucestershire to my sister who was very ill, and his youngest girl, of which he was very fond, is since dead. But I believe by that time his wife has a little recovered her sickness and the loss of her child, he will be coming this way. My father is reasonably well, but keeps his chamber still, and will hardly, I am afraid, ever be so perfectly recovered as to come abroad again.

I am sorry for poor Walker, but you need not doubt of what he has of yours in his hands, for it seems he does not use to do his work himself. I speak seriously, he keeps a Frenchman that sets all his seals and rings. If what you say of my Lady Leppington be of your own knowledge, I shall believe you, but otherwise I can assure you I have heard from people that pretend to know her very well, that her kindness to Compton was very moderate, and that she never liked him so well as when he died and gave her his estate. But they might be deceived, and 'tis not so strange as that you should imagine a coldness and an indifference in my letters where I so little meant it; but I am not displeased you should desire my kindness enough to apprehend the loss of it when it is safest. Only I would not have you apprehend it so far as to

believe it possible—that were an injury to all the assurances I have given you, and if you love me you cannot think me unworthy. I should think, myself so, if I found you grew indifferent to me, that I have had so long and so particular a friendship for; but, sure, this is more than I need to say. You are enough in my heart to know all my thoughts, and if so, you know better than I can tell you how much I am

Yours.

DEAN SWIFT (1667-1745)

THOSE who know Swift only through his books are inclined to regard him as a man of a bitter humour, looking with contempt upon his fellowmen, and with intolerance upon their weaknesses. The real Swift, as we find him in his letters, is quite different. His letters are charming in their sincerity and frankness. He enjoyed the lasting friendship of all the great men of his time. His purse and his influence were always at their service when necessary. Among his friends were many women; and many of his best letters were written to them.

I

The following letter was written to Harley, Earl of Oxford, at the time when he was being charged with treason. In this Swift showed the reality of his friendship.

DUBLIN, *July* 19, 1715.

MY LORD,

It may look like an idle or officious thing in me to give your lordship any interruption under your present circumstances; yet I could never forgive myself if, after being treated for several years with the greatest kindness and distinction, by a person of your lordship's virtue, I should omit making you at this time the humblest offers of my poor service and attendance. It is the first time I ever solicited you in my own behalf; and if I am refused, it will be the first request you ever refused me. I do not think myself obliged to regulate my opinions by the proceedings of a House of Lords or Commons; and therefore, however they may acquit themselves in your lordship's case, I shall take the liberty of thinking and calling your lordship the ablest and faithfulest minister and truest lover of your country, that this age has produced; and I have already taken care that you shall be so represented to posterity in spite of all the rage and malice

of your enemies. And this I know will not be wholly indifferent to your lordship; who, next to a good conscience, always esteemed reputation your best possession. Your intrepid behaviour under this prosecution astonishes every one but me, who know you so well, and how little it is in the power of human actions or events to discompose you. I have seen your lordship labouring under great difficulties, and exposed to great dangers, and overcoming both, by the providence of God, and your own wisdom and courage. Your life has already been attempted by private malice; it is now pursued by public resentment. Nothing else remained. You were destined to both trials; and the same power which delivered you out of the paws of the lion and the bear, will, I trust, deliver you out of the hands of the uncircumcised.

I can write no more. You suffer for a good cause; for having preserved your country, and for having been the great instrument under God, of his present majesty's peaceable accession to the throne. This I know, and this your enemies know; and this I will take care that all the world shall know, and future ages be convinced of. God Almighty protect you, and continue to you that fortune and magnanimity he has endowed you with! Farewell.

JON. SWIFT.

II

A jesting letter from Swift to Miss Hoadley, daughter of the Archbishop of Dublin.

June 4, 1734.

MADAM;

When I lived in England, once every year I issued out an edict, commanding that all ladies of wit, sense, merit and quality, who had an ambition to be acquainted with me, should make the first advances at their peril; which edict, you may believe, was universally obeyed. When (much against my will) I came to live in this kingdom, I published the same edict; only, the harvest here being not altogether so plentiful, I confined myself to a smaller compass. This made me often wonder how you came so long to neglect your duty; for, if you pretend ignorance, I may produce legal witnesses against you.

I have heard of a judge bribed with a pig, but it was discovered by the squeaking; and therefore, you have been so politic as to send me a dead one, which can tell no tales. Your present of butter was made with the same design, as a known court practice, to grease my fist that I might keep silence. These are great offences, contrived on purpose to corrupt my integrity. And, besides, I apprehend, that if I should wait on you to return my thanks,

you will deny that the pig and butter were any advances at all on your side, and give out that I made them first; by which I may endanger the fundamental privilege that I have kept so many years in two kingdoms, at least make it a point of controversy. However, I have two ways to be revenged; first, I will let all the ladies of my acquaintance know, that you, the sole daughter and child of his grace of Dublin, are so mean as to descend to understand housewifery; which every girl of this town, who can afford sixpence a-month for a chair, would scorn to be thought to have the least knowledge in; and this will give you as ill a reputation, as if you had been caught in the fact of reading a history, or handling a needle, or working in a field at Tallagh. My other revenge shall be this; when my lord's gentleman delivered his message, after I put him some questions, he drew out a paper containing your directions, and in your hand; I said it properly belonged to me; and, when I had read it, I put it in my pocket, and am ready to swear, when lawfully called, that it is written in a fair hand, rightly spelt and good plain sense. You may now see I have you at mercy; for, upon the least offence given, I will show the paper to every female scrawler I meet, who will soon spread about the town, that your writing and spelling are ungenteel and unfashionable, more like a parson than a lady.

I suppose, by this time, you are willing to submit; and therefore, I desire you may stint me to two china

bowls of butter a-week; for my breakfast is that of a sickly man, rice gruel; and I am wholly a stranger to tea and coffee, the companions of bread and butter. I received my third bowl last night, and I think my second is almost entire. I hope and believe my lord archbishop will teach his neighbouring tenants and farmers a little English country management; and I lay it upon you, madam, to bring housewifery in fashion among our ladies; that, by your example, they may no longer pride themselves on their natural or affected ignorance. I am, with the truest respect and esteem,

Madam,

Your most obedient and obliged &c.,

JON. SWIFT.

JOSEPH ADDISON (1672-1719)

ADDISON is famous as the finest prose-writer of the eighteenth century. Much of his best work appeared in the *Tatler* and the *Spectator* edited by his friend Steele; and the essays on Sir Roger de Coverley will never be forgotten.

The elegant style of his other writings is seen also in his letters, which on this very account, have less charm than the more familiar unstudied letters of Steele.

The following letter was written to Congreve the poet.

BLOIS, *December*, 1699.

SIR,

I was very sorry to hear in your last letter that you were so terribly afflicted with the gout, though for your comfort I believe you are the first English poet that has been complimented with the distemper: I was myself at that time sick of a fever, which I believe proceeded from the same cause; but at present I am so well recovered that I can scarce forbear beginning my letter with Tully's preface *Si vales bene est, ego quidem valeo*. You must excuse me for giving you a line of Latin now and then, since I find myself in some danger of losing the tongue, for I perceive a new language, like a new mistress, is apt to make a man forget all his old ones. I assure you I met with a very remarkable instance of this nature at Paris, in a poor Irishman that had lost the little English he had brought over with him, without being able to learn any French in its stead. I asked him what language he spoke: he very innocently answered me, "No language, Monsieur"; which, as I afterwards found, were all the words he was master of in both tongues. I am at present in a town where all the languages in Europe are spoken except English, which is not to be heard I believe within fifty miles of the place. My greatest diversion is to run over in my thoughts the variety of noble

Si vales bene est, ego quidem valeo. If you are well, that is good! I also am well.

scenes I was entertained with before I came thither. I do not believe, as good a poet as you are, that you can make finer landscapes than those about the king's houses, or with all your descriptions build a more magnificent palace than Versailles. I am, however, so singular as to prefer Fontainebleau to all the rest. It is situated among rocks and woods that give you a fine variety of savage prospects. The king has humoured the genius of the place, and only made use of so much art as is necessary to help and regulate nature without reforming her too much. The cascades seem to break through the clefts and cracks of rocks, that are covered over with moss, and look as if they were piled upon one another by accident. There is an artificial wildness in the meadows, walks, and canals, and the garden, instead of a wall, is fenced on the lower end by a natural mound of rockwork, that strikes the eye very agreeably. For my part, I think there is something more charming in these rude heaps of stone than in so many statues, and would as soon see a river winding through woods and meadows as when it is tossed up in such a variety of figures at Versailles. But I begin to talk like Dr. Lister. To pass therefore from works of nature to those of art; in my opinion the pleasantest part of Versailles is the gallery. Every one sees on each side of it something that will be sure to please him, for one of them commands a view of the finest garden in the world, and the other is wainscoted with looking-glass. The history of the present king,

till the year 16, is painted on the roof by Le Brun, so that His Majesty has actions enough by him to furnish another gallery much longer than the first. He is represented with all the terror and majesty that you can imagine, in every part of the picture, and sees his young face as perfectly drawn in the roof as his present one in the side. The painter has represented his most Christian Majesty under the figure of Jupiter throwing thunderbolts all about the ceiling, and striking terror into the Danube and Rhine, that lie astonished and blasted with lightning a little above the cornice. I believe by this time you are afraid I shall carry you from room to room and lead you through the whole palace; truly, if I had not tired you already, I could not forbear showing you a staircase that they say is the noblest in its kind; but after so tedious a letter I shall conclude with a petition to you, that you would deliver the enclosed to Mr. Montagu, for I am afraid of interrupting him with my impertinence when he is engaged in more serious affairs.

Tu faciles aditus et mollia tempora novis,

I am, &c.,

J. ADDISON.

Mr. Montagu. Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Tu faciles aditus et mollia tempora novis. You know the easiest means of access and the most propitious time.

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RICHARD STEELE (1671-1729)

STEELE was a writer of plays, essays and pamphlets. He earned fame in connection with the journals which he established. Of these the most successful were the *Tatler* and the *Spectator*.

Here is one of his famous love-letters, written just a week before his marriage.

ST. JAMES'S COFFEE-HOUSE,
September 1, 1707.

MADAM,

It is the hardest thing in the world to be in love and yet attend to business. As for me, all who speak to me find me out, and I must lock myself up, or other people will do it for me.

A gentleman ask'd me this morning what news from Lisbon, and I answer'd she's exquisitely handsome. Another desir'd to know when I had been last at Hampton Court, I reply'd 'twill be on Tuesday come se'ennight. Prithee allow me at least to kisse your hand before that day, that my mind may be in some composure. O love!

A thousand torments dwell about thee,
Yet who would live to live without thee?

Methinks I could write a volume to you, but all the language on earth would fail in saying how much, and with what disinterested passion, I am ever yours,

RICHD. STEELE.

ALEXANDER POPE (1688-1744)

POPE will always be remembered chiefly as a poet; but his letters were also highly popular in his own times. They contain many fine passages, but generally give the impression of having been written for publication. They are therefore lacking in the frankness and unreserved familiarity of Cowper's and Lamb's letters, and sometimes even arouse a suspicion of insincerity.

The example given shows the best side of Pope's nature—his love for his mother.

It is written to Swift.

1728.

I send you a very odd thing, a paper printed in Boston in New England; wherein you'll find a real person, a member of their parliament, of the name of Jonathan Gulliver. If the fame of that traveller has travelled thither, it has travelled very quick, to have folks christened already by the name of the supposed author. But if you object, that no child so lately christened could be arrived at years of maturity to be elected into parliament, I reply (to solve the riddle) that the person is an Anabaptist, and not christened till full age, which sets all right. However it be, the accident is very singular, that these two names should be united.

Mr. Gay's Opera has been acted near forty days running, and will certainly continue the whole season. So he has more than a fence about his thousand pounds; he'll soon be thinking of a fence about his two thousand. Shall no one of us live, as we would wish each other to live? Shall we have no annuity: you no settlement on this side, and I no prospect of getting to you on the other? This world is made for Cæsar; as Cato said, for ambitious, false, or flattering people to domineer in; nay, they would not, by their good will, leave us our very books, thoughts or words in quiet. I despise the world; yet, I assure you, more than either Gay or you, and the court more than all the rest of the world.

As for those scribblers for whom you apprehend I would suppress my Dulness (which, by the way, for the future, you are to call by a more pompous name The Dunciad) how much that nest of hornets are my regard, will easily appear to you when you read the Treatise of the Bathos.

At all adventures, yours and my name shall stand linked as friends to posterity, both in verse and prose; and as Tully calls it, *in consuetudine Studiorum*; would to God, our persons could but as well, and as surely, be inseparable. I find my other ties dropping from me; some worn off, some torn off, some relaxing daily. My greatest, both by duty, gratitude, and humanity, Time is shaking every moment, and it now hangs but by a thread! I am

Mr. Gay's Opera. The Beggar's Opera.

many years the older for living so much with one so old; much the more helpless, for having been so long helped and tended by her; much the more considerate and tender, for a daily commerce with one who required me justly to be both to her, and consequently the more melancholy and thoughtful, and the less fit for others, who want only, in a companion or a friend, to be amused or entertained. My constitution, too, has had its share of decay, as well as my spirits; and I am as much in the decline at forty, as you at sixty. I believe we should be fit to live together, could I get a little more health, which might make me not quite insupportable; your deafness would agree with my dulness; you would not want me to speak when you could not hear. But God forbid you should be as destitute of the social comforts of life, as I must when I lose my mother; or that ever you should lose your more useful acquaintance so utterly as to turn your thoughts to such a broken reed as I am, who could so ill supply your wants! I am extremely troubled at the return of your deafness; you cannot be too particular in the accounts of your health to me: everything you do or say in this kind, obliges me, nay, delights me, to see the justice you do me, in thinking me concerned in all your concerns; so that though the pleasantest thing you can tell me be that you are better or easier; next to that it pleases me, that you make me the person you would complain to. As the obtaining the love of valuable men is the

happiest end I know of in this life, so the next felicity is to get rid of fools and scoundrels; which I can't but own to you, was one part of my design in falling upon these Authors, whose incapacity is not greater than their insincerity, and of whom I have always found (if I may quote myself),

That each bad Author is as bad a Friend.

Adieu.

LADY MARY MONTAGUE (1689-1762)

By her letters Lady Mary Montague holds a lasting place in English Literature. Her husband was ambassador to Turkey and she accompanied him on his travels. Some of her best letters are those describing her experiences abroad. Much of her correspondence was deliberately prepared for publication; and she advised one of her friends to keep her letters, asserting that in forty years they would be as famous as those of Madame Sévigné.

The specimen given is one of her letters from Turkey. One can imagine the interest these letters would excite at a time when Eastern Europe was hardly ever visited by our countrymen.

TO THE ABBOT [The Abbé Conti],

ADRIANOPLE, *May* 17, O.S. [1717]

I am going to leave Adrianople, and I would not do it without giving some account of all that is curious in it, which I have taken a great deal of pains to see.

I will not trouble you with wise dissertations whether or no this is the same city that was anciently called Orestesit or Oreste, which you know better than I do. It is now called from the Emperor Adrian, and was the first European seat of the Turkish empire, and has been the favourite residence of many sultans. Mahomet the Fourth, and Mustapha, the brother of the reigning emperor, were so fond of it that they wholly abandoned Constantinople: which humour so far exasperated the janissaries, it was a considerable motive to the rebellions which deposed them. Yet this man seems to love to keep his court here. I can give no reason for this partiality. 'Tis true the situation is fine, and the country all round very beautiful; but the air is extremely bad, and the seraglio itself is not free from the ill effect of it. The town is said to be eight miles in compass; I suppose they reckon in the gardens. There are some good houses in it, I mean large ones; for the architecture of their palaces never makes any great show. It is now very full of people; but they are most of them such as follow the court, or camp; and when they are removed, I am told 'tis no populous city.

The river Maritza (anciently the Hebrus), on which it is situated, is dried up every summer, which contributes very much to make it unwholesome. It is now a very pleasant stream. There are two noble bridges built over it.

I had the curiosity to go to see the Exchange in my Turkish dress, which is disguise sufficient. Yet I own I was not very easy when I saw it crowded with janissaries; but they dare not be rude to a woman, and made way for me with as much respect as if I had been in my own figure. It is half a mile in length, the roof arched, and kept extremely neat. It holds three hundred and sixty-five shops, furnished with all sorts of rich goods, exposed to sale in the same manner as at the New Exchange in London; but the pavement kept much neater; and the shops all so clean, they seemed just new painted. Idle people of all sorts walk here for their diversion, or amuse themselves with drinking coffee, or sherbet, which is cried about as oranges and sweetmeats are in our play-houses.

I observed most of the rich tradesmen were Jews. These people are in incredible power in this country. They have many privileges above all the natural Turks themselves, and have formed a very considerable commonwealth here, being judged by their own laws, and have drawn the whole trade of the empire into their hands, partly by the firm union among themselves, and prevailing on the idle temper and want of industry of the Turks. Every Pasha has

his Jew, who is his *homme d'affaires*; he is let into all his secrets, and does all his business. No bargain is made, no bribe received, no merchandise disposed of, but what passes through their hands. They are the physicians, the stewards, and the interpreters of all the great men.

You can judge how advantageous this is to a people who never fail to make use of the smallest advantages. They have found the secret of making themselves so necessary, they are certain of the protection of the court, whatever ministry is in power. Even the English, French and Italian merchants, who are sensible of their artifices, are, however, forced to trust their affairs to their negotiation, nothing of trade being managed without them, and the meanest among them is too important to be disobliged, since the whole body take care of his interests with as much vigour as they would those of the most considerable of their members. There are many of them vastly rich, but take care to make little public show of it; though they live in their houses in the utmost luxury and magnificence. This copious subject has drawn me from my description of the exchange, founded by Ali Pasha, whose name it bears. Near it is the *tchartshi*, a street of a mile in length, full of shops of all kinds of fine merchandise, but excessively dear, nothing being made here. It is covered over the top with boards, to keep out the rain, that merchants may meet conveniently in all

Homme d'affaires. Business man.

weathers. The bessiten near it, is another exchange, built upon pillars, where all sorts of horse-furniture is sold; glittering everywhere with gold, rich embroidery, and jewels [it] makes a very agreeable show.

From this place I went, in my Turkish coach, to the camp, which is to move in a few days to the frontiers. The Sultan is already gone to his tents, and all his court; the appearance of them is, indeed, very magnificent. Those of the great men are rather like palaces than tents, taking up a great compass of ground, and being divided into a vast number of apartments. They are all of green, and the pashas of three tails have those before their tents, which are adorned on the top with gilded balls, more or less according to their different ranks. The ladies go in their coaches to see this camp, as eagerly as ours did to that of Hyde-Park; but it is easy to observe, that the soldiers do not begin the campaign with any great cheerfulness. The war is a general grievance upon the people, but particularly hard upon the tradesmen, now that the Grand Signior is resolved to lead his army in person. Every company of them is obliged, upon this occasion, to make a present according to their ability.

I took the pains of rising at six in the morning to see that ceremony, which did not, however, begin till eight. The Grand Signior was at the seraglio window, to see the procession, which passed through all the principal streets. It was preceded by an

effendi, mounted on a camel, richly furnished, reading aloud the Alcoran, finely bound, laid upon a cushion. He was surrounded by a parcel of boys, in white, singing some verses of it, followed by a man dressed in green boughs, representing a clean husbandman sowing seed. After him several reapers, with garlands and ears of corn, as Ceres is pictured, with scythes in their hands, seeming to mow. Then a little machine drawn by oxen, in which was a windmill, and boys, employed in grinding corn, followed by another machine, drawn by buffaloes, carrying an oven, and two more boys, one employed in kneading the bread, and another in drawing it out of the oven. These boys threw little cakes on both sides among the crowd, and were followed by the whole company of bakers, marching on foot, two and two, in their best clothes, with cakes, loaves, pasties, and pies of all sorts, on their heads, and after them two buffoons, or jack-puddings with their faces and clothes smeared with meal, who diverted the mob with their antic gestures. In the same manner followed all the companies of trade in the empire: the nobler sort, such as jewellers, mercers, etc., finely mounted, and many of the pageants that represented their trades perfectly magnificent; among which the furriers made one of the best figures, being a very large machine set round with the skins of ermines, foxes, etc., so well stuffed, the animals seemed to be alive, followed by music and dancers. I believe they were, upon the whole, at

least twenty thousand men, all ready to follow his highness if he commanded them. The rear was closed by the volunteers, who came to beg the honour of dying in his service. This part of the show seemed to me so barbarous, that I removed from the window upon the first appearance of it. They were all naked to the middle. Some had their arms pierced through with arrows left sticking in them. Others had them sticking in their heads, the blood trickling down their faces, and some slashed their arms with sharp knives, making the blood spout upon those that stood near; and this is looked upon as an expression of their zeal for glory. I am told that some make use of it to advance their love and when they are near the window where their mistress stands (all the women in town being veiled to see this spectacle), they stick another arrow for her sake, who gives some sign of approbation and encouragement to this gallantry. The whole show lasted for near eight hours, to my great sorrow, who was heartily tired, though I was in the house of the widow of the capitain-pasha (admiral), who refreshed me with coffee, sweetmeats, sherbet, etc., with all possible civility.

I went, two days after, to see the mosque of Sultan Selim I, which is a building very well worth the curiosity of a traveller. I was dressed in my Turkish habit, and admitted without scruple: though I believe they guessed who I was, by the extreme officiousness of the door-keeper to shew me every

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part of it. It is situated very advantageously in the midst of the city and in the highest part, making a very noble show. The first court has four gates, and the innermost three. They are both of them surrounded with cloisters, with marble pillars of the Ionic order, finely polished, and of very lively colours; the whole pavement being white marble, the roof of the cloisters being divided into several cupolas or domes, leaded, with gilt balls on the top. In the midst of each court [are] fine fountains of white marble; before the great gate of the mosque, a portico, with green marble pillars. It has five gates, the body of the mosque being one prodigious dome.

I understand so little of architecture, I dare not pretend to speak of the proportions. It seemed to me very regular; this I am sure of, it is vastly high, and I thought it the noblest building I ever saw. It had two rows of marble galleries on pillars, with marble balusters; the pavement marble, covered with Persian carpets and, in my opinion, it is a great addition to its beauty, that it is not divided into pews, and incumbered with forms and benches like our churches; nor the pillars (which are most of them red and white marble) disfigured by the little tawdry images and pictures, that give the Roman Catholic churches the air of toy-shops. The walls seemed to me inlaid with such very lively colours, in small flowers, I could not imagine what stones had been made use of. But going nearer, I saw they

were crusted with japan china, which has a very beautiful effect. In the midst hung a vast lamp of silver, gilt; besides which, I do verily believe, there were at least two thousand of a lesser size. This must look very glorious when they are all lighted; but that being at night, no women are suffered to enter. Under the large lamp is a great pulpit of carved wood, gilt; and just by it, a fountain to wash, which you know is an essential part of their devotion. In one corner is a little gallery inclosed with gilded lattices, for the Grand Signior. At the upper end, a large niche, very like an altar, raised two steps, covered with gold brocade, and standing before it, two silver gilt candlesticks, the height of a man, and in them white wax candles, as thick as a man's waist. The outside of the mosque is adorned with four towers, vastly high, gilt on the top, from whence the imaums call the people to prayers. I had the curiosity to go up one of them, which is contrived so artfully, as to give surprise to all that see it. There is but one door, which leads to three different staircases, going to the three different stories of the tower, in such a manner, that three priests may ascend, rounding, without ever meeting each other; a contrivance very much admired.

Behind the mosque, is an exchange full of shops, where poor artificers are lodged gratis. I saw several dervises at their prayers here. They are dressed in a plain piece of woollen, with their arms bare, and a woollen cap on their heads, like a high-crowned

hat without brims. I went to see some other mosques, built much after the same manner, but not comparable in point of magnificence to this I have described, which is infinitely beyond any church in Germany or England; I won't talk of other countries I have not seen. The seraglio does not seem a very magnificent palace. But the gardens are very large, plentifully supplied with water, and full of trees; which is all I know of them, having never been in them.

I tell you nothing of the order of Mr. Wortley's entry, and his audience. Those things are always the same, and have been so often described, I won't trouble you with the repetition. The young prince, about eleven years old, sits near his father when he gives audience: he is a handsome boy; but probably will not immediately succeed the Sultan, there being two sons of Sultan Mastapha (his eldest brother) remaining; the eldest about twenty years old, on whom the hopes of the people are fixed. This reign has been bloody and avaricious. I am apt to believe they are very impatient to see the end of it.

I am, Sir, your, etc.

I will write to you again from Constantinople.

THE EARL OF CHESTERFIELD (1694-1773)

IN his lifetime, Lord Chesterfield did much to make his name remembered. He held a prominent place in public life, being, in succession, Ambassador to Holland, Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, and one of His Majesty's principal Secretaries of State. He was also distinguished for his wit, his graceful manners and his elegant conversation.

To-day, all this is largely forgotten; and he is remembered chiefly for his letters to his son.

Johnson and Macaulay thought little of these, because they pay less attention to real goodness of character than to the little graces of manner which lead to popularity. However, they contain much good advice well worthy of attention.

I

LONDON, *March* 6, O.S. 1747.

DEAR BOY,

Whatever you do will always affect me very sensibly one way or another; and I am now most agreeably affected by two letters which I have lately seen from Lausanne upon your subject; the one was from Madame St. Germain, the other from Monsieur Pampigny; they both give so good an account of you, that I thought myself obliged, in justice both to them and to you, to let you know it. Those who

deserve a good character ought to have the satisfaction of knowing that they have it, both as a reward and as an encouragement. They write, that you are not only *décrotté*, but tolerably well-bred; and that the English crust of awkward bashfulness, shyness and roughness (of which, by-the-by, you had your share), is pretty well rubbed off. I am most heartily glad of it; for, as I have often told you, those lesser talents, of an engaging, insinuating manner, an easy good breeding, a genteel behaviour and address, are of infinitely more advantage than they are generally thought to be, especially here in England. Virtue and learning, like gold, have their intrinsic value; but if they are not polished, they certainly lose a great deal of their lustre; and even polished brass will pass upon more people than rough gold. What a number of sins does the cheerful, easy, good breeding of the French frequently cover! Many of them want common sense, many more common learning; but in general they make up so much by their manner for those defects, that frequently they pass undiscovered. I have often said, and do think, that a Frenchman, who, with a fund of virtue, learning, and good sense, has the manners and good breeding of his country, is the perfection of human nature. This perfection you may, if you please, and I hope you will, arrive at. You know what virtue is; you may have it if you will; it is in every man's power; and miserable is the man who has it not. Good

Décrotté. Polished or elegant in manners.

sense God has given you. Learning you already possess enough of, to have, in a reasonable time, all that a man need have. With this you are thrown out early into the world, where it will be your own fault if you do not acquire all the other accomplishments necessary to complete and adorn your character. You will do well to make your compliments to Madame St. Germain and Monsieur Pampigny, and tell them how sensible you are of their partiality to you, in the advantageous testimonies which, you are informed, they have given of you here.

Adieu! Continue to deserve such testimonies and then you will not only deserve, but enjoy, my truest affection.

II

More advice from Lord Chesterfield.

LONDON, *November 24, 1747.*

DEAR BOY,

As often as I write to you (and that you know is pretty often), so often I am in doubt whether it is to any purpose, and whether it is not labour and paper lost. This entirely depends upon the degree of reason and reflection which you are master of, or think proper to exert. If you give yourself time to think, and have sense enough to think right, two

reflections must necessarily occur to you: the one is, that I have a great deal of experience, and that you have none; the other is, that I am the only man living who cannot have, directly or indirectly, any interest concerning you but your own. From which two undeniable principles, the obvious and necessary conclusion is that you ought, for your own sake, to attend to and follow my advice.

If, by the application which I recommend to you, you acquire great knowledge, you alone are the gainer; I pay for it. If you should deserve either a good or a bad character, mine will be exactly what it is now, and will neither be the better in the first case, nor the worse in the latter. You alone will be the gainer or the loser.

Whatever your pleasures may be, I neither can nor shall envy you them, as old people are sometimes suspected by young people to do; and I shall only lament, if they should prove such as are unbecoming a man of honour, or below a man of sense. But you will be the real sufferer, if they are such. As, therefore, it is plain that I have no other motive than that of affection in whatever I say to you, you ought to look upon me as your best and, for some years to come, your only friend.

True friendship requires certain proportions of age and manners, and can never subsist where they are extremely different, except in the relations of parent and child, where affection on one side and regard on the other make up the difference. The friendship

which you may contract with people of your own age, may be sincere, may be warm; but must be for some time reciprocally unprofitable, as there can be no experience on either side.

The young leading the young, is like the blind leading the blind; "they will both fall into the ditch." The only sure guide is he who has often gone the road which you want to go. Let me be that guide, who have gone all roads, and who can consequently point out to you the best. If you ask me why I went any of the bad roads myself, I will answer you very truly, that is for want of a good guide; ill example invited me one way, and a good guide was wanting to show me a better. But if anybody, capable of advising me, had taken the same pains with me, which I have taken, and will continue to take with you, I should have avoided many follies and inconveniences, which undirected youth ran me into. My father was neither able nor desirous to advise me; which is what I hope you cannot say of yours. You see I make use of the word advise; because I would much rather have the assent of your reason to my advice, than the submission of your will to my authority. This, I persuade myself, will happen, from that degree of sense which I think you have; and therefore I will go on advising, and with hopes of success. You are now settled for some time at Leipsic: the principal object of your stay there is the knowledge of books and sciences; which if you do not, by attention and

application, make yourself master of while you are there, you will be ignorant of them all the rest of your life: and take my word for it, a life of ignorance is not only a very contemptible, but a very tiresome one. Redouble your attention, then, to Mr. Harte, in your private studies of the *literæ humaniores*, especially Greek. State your difficulties whenever you have any; do not suppress them either from mistaken shame, lazy indifference, or in order to have done the sooner. Do the same with Professor Mascow or any other professor.

When you have thus usefully employed your mornings, you may with a safe conscience divert yourself in the evenings, and make those evenings very useful too, by passing them in good company, and by observation and attention, learning as much of the world as Leipsic can teach you. You will observe and imitate the manners of the people of the best fashion there; not that they are (it may be) the best manners in the world, but because they are the best manners of the place where you are, to which a man of sense always conforms. The nature of things is always and everywhere the same, but the modes of them vary, more or less, in every country; and an easy and genteel conformity to them, or rather the assuming of them at proper times and in proper places, is what particularly constitutes a man of the world, and a well-bred man.

Literæ humaniores. Classical literature—Latin and Greek.

Here is advice enough, I think, and too much it may be you will think, for one letter; if you follow it you will get knowledge, character, and pleasure by it; if you do not, I only lose *operam et oleum*, which, in all events, I do not grudge you.

I send you by a person who sets out this day for Leipsic, a small packet containing some valuable things which you left behind; to which I have added, by way of New Year's gift, a very pretty tooth-pick case; and, by the way, pray take care of your teeth, and keep them extremely clean. I have likewise sent you the Greek roots lately translated into English from the French of the Port Royal. Inform yourself what the Port Royal is. To conclude with a quibble; I hope you will not only feed upon Greek roots, but likewise digest them perfectly. Adieu.

Port Royal. Port Royal was a famous French monastery. Later it became the abode of a celebrated set of men whose piety and learning attracted pupils. For their school they prepared the well-known Port-Royal Greek and Latin Grammars, Logic, etc.

DR. SAMUEL JOHNSON (1709-84)

DR. JOHNSON was the author of many works: poetry, essays, biography and criticism.

I

When Johnson was preparing his great dictionary he sought the patronage of Lord Chesterfield; but this was denied him. Afterwards, when, by his own efforts he had achieved success, he learned that some articles praising his work were from the pen of that noble lord. The following letter was his answer:

MY LORD,

I have been lately informed, by the proprietor of the *World*, that two papers, in which my Dictionary is recommended to the public, were written by your Lordship. To be so distinguished is an honour which, being very little accustomed to favours from the great, I know not well how to receive, or in what terms to acknowledge. When, upon slight encouragement, I first visited your Lordship, I was overpowered, like the rest of mankind, by the enchantment of your address, and could not forbear to wish that I might boast myself *Le vainqueur du vainqueur de la terre*: that I might obtain that

Le vainqueur du vainqueur de la terre. Conqueror of the world's conqueror.

regard for which I saw the world contending; but I found my attendance so little encouraged, that neither pride nor modesty would suffer me to continue it. When I had once addressed your Lordship in public, I had exhausted all the art of pleasing which a retired and uncourtly scholar can possess. I had done all that I could, and no man is well pleased to have his all neglected, be it ever so little. Seven years, my Lord, have now passed, since I waited in your outward rooms, or was repulsed from your door, during which time I have been pushing on my work through difficulties, of which it is useless to complain, and have brought it at last to the verge of publication, without one act of assistance, one word of encouragement, or one smile of favour. Such treatment I did not expect, for I never had a patron before. The shepherd in Virgil grew at last acquainted with Love, and found him a native of the rocks. Is not a patron, my Lord, one who looks with unconcern on a man struggling for life in the water, and when he has reached ground, encumbers him with help? The notice which you have been pleased to take of my labours, had it been early, had been kind; but it has been delayed till I am indifferent, and cannot enjoy it; till I am solitary, and cannot impart it; till I am known, and do not want it. I hope it is no very cynical asperity not to confess obligations where no benefit has been received, or to be unwilling that the public should consider me as owing that to a patron, which Pro-

vidence has enabled me to do for myself. Having carried on my work thus far with so little obligation to any favourer of learning, I shall not be disappointed though I should conclude it, if less be possible, with less; for I have been long wakened from that dream of hope in which I once boasted myself with so much exultation.

My Lord, your Lordship's most humble, most obedient servant,

SAM. JOHNSON.

II

The letters of Dr. Johnson are always dignified in tone and careful in composition; he could hardly have written a slovenly letter had he tried. Most of them show, however, the real friendliness of the man, a side of his character known only to those really intimate with him.

This letter is one of many written to Mrs. Thrale, the wife of one of his dearest friends.

To Mrs. Thrale.

DEAR MADAM,

You talk of writing and writing, as if you had all the writing to yourself. If our correspondence were printed, I am sure posterity, for posterity is always the author's favourite, would say that I am a good writer too. To sit down so often with nothing

to say: to say something so often, almost without consciousness of saying, and without any remembrance of having said, is a power of which I will not violate my modesty by boasting, but I do not believe that everybody has it.

Some, when they write to their friends, are all affection: some are wise and sententious: some strain their powers for efforts of gaiety: some write news, and some write secrets: but to make a letter without affection, without wisdom, without gaiety, without news, and without a secret, is, doubtless, the great epistolick art.

In a man's letters, you know, Madam, his soul lies naked, his letters are only the mirrour of his breast: whatever passes within him is shown undisguised in its natural process: nothing is inverted, nothing distorted: you see systems in their elements: you discover actions in their motives.

Of this great truth, sounded by the knowing to the ignorant, and so echoed by the ignorant to the knowing, what evidence have you now before you! Is not my soul laid open in these veracious pages? Do you not see me reduced to my first principles? Is not this the pleasure of corresponding with a friend, where doubt and distrust have no place, and every thing is said as it is thought. The original idea is laid down in its simple purity, and all the supervenient conceptions are spread over it *stratum super stratum*, as they happen to be formed. These are the letters by which souls are united, and by which

minds naturally in unison move each other as they are moved themselves. I know, dearest Lady, that in the perusal of this, such is the consanguinity of our intellects, you will be touched as I am touched. I have concealed nothing from you, nor do I expect ever to repent of having thus opened my heart.

I am, etc.,

SAM. JOHNSON.

THOMAS GRAY (1716-71)

THE poet Gray, author of *The Elegy written in a Country Churchyard*, was also an excellent letter-writer. He was one of the most learned men of his time. His letters abound in descriptions of nature, but are charming also, for their pleasant style and the picture they give of the friendly and sincere character of the poet.

I

This letter was written to Horace Walpole, who was even a greater letter-writer than Gray.

September, 1737.

DEAR SIR,

I was hindered in my last, and so could not give you all the trouble I would have done. The

description of a road, which your coach wheels have so often honoured, it would be needless to give you; suffice it that I arrived safe at my uncle's, who is a great hunter in imagination; his dogs take up every chair in the house, so I am forced to stand at this present writing; and though the gout forbids him galloping after them in the field, yet he continues to regale his ears and nose with their comfortable noise and stink. He holds me mighty cheap, I perceive, for walking when I should ride, and reading when I should hunt. My comfort amidst all this is, that I have at the distance of half a mile, through a green lane, a forest (the vulgar call it a common) all my own, at least as good as so, for I spy no human thing in it but myself. It is a little chaos of mountains and precipices; mountains, it is true, that do not ascend much above the clouds, nor are the declivities quite so amazing as Dover cliff; but just such hills as people who love their necks as well as I do may venture to climb, and craggs that give the eye as much pleasure as if they were more dangerous. Both vale and hill are covered with most venerable beeches, and other very reverend vegetables, that, like most other ancient people are always dreaming out their old stories to the winds,

And as they bow their hoary tops relate,
In murmuring sounds, the dark decrees of fate,
While visions, as poetic eyes avow,
Cling to each leaf and swarm on every bough.

At the foot of one of these squats ME, I (*il penseroso*),

and there grow to the trunk for a whole morning. The timorous hare and sportive squirrel gambol around me like Adam in Paradise before he had an Eve; but I think he did not use to read Virgil, as I commonly do there. In this situation I often converse with my Horace, aloud too, that is, talk to you, but I do not remember that I ever heard you answer me. I beg pardon for taking all the conversation to myself, but it is entirely your own fault. We have old Mr. Southern at a gentleman's house a little way off, who often comes to see us; he is now seventy-seven years old, and has almost wholly lost his memory: but is as agreeable as an old man can be, at least I persuade myself so when I look at him, and think of Isabella and Oroonoko. I shall be in town in about three weeks. Adieu.

THOMAS GRAY.

II

The Rev. Norton Nicholls, to whom this letter was written, was one of Gray's most intimate friends.

PEMBROKE HALL, *Aug.* 16, 1766.

DEAR SIR,

It is long since that I heard you were gone in haste into Yorkshire on account of your mother's illness, and the same letter informed me that she

Mr. Southern. Thomas Southern, a dramatist. Among his works were *The Fatal Marriage* and *Oroonoko*.

was recovered, otherwise I had then wrote to you only to beg you would take care of her, and to inform you that I had discovered a thing very little known, which is, that in one's whole life one can never have any more than a single mother. You may think this is obvious, and (what you call) a trite observation. You are a green gosling! I was at the same age (very near) as wise as you, and yet I never discovered this (with full evidence and conviction I mean) till it was too late. It is thirteen years ago, and seems but as yesterday, and every day I live it sinks deeper into my heart.* Many a corollary could I draw from this axiom for your use (not for my own), but I will leave you the merit of doing it for yourself. Pray tell me how your health is: I conclude it perfect, as I hear you offered yourself as a guide to Mr. Palgrave into the Sierra-Morena of Yorkshire. For me, I passed the end of May and all June in Kent, not disagreeably. In the west part of it, from every eminence, the eye catches some long reach of the Thames or Medway, with all their shipping; in the east the sea breaks in upon you, and mixes its white transient sails and glittering blue expanse with the deeper and brighter greens of the woods and corn. This sentence is so fine I am

* He seldom mentioned his mother without a sigh. After her death her gowns and wearing apparel were found in a trunk in his apartments just as she had left them! it seemed as if he could never take the resolution to open it, in order to distribute them to his female relations, to whom, by his will, he bequeathed them.—MASON.

quite ashamed; but no matter! you must translate it into prose. Palgrave, if he heard it, would cover his face with his pudding sleeve. I do not tell you of the great and small beasts, and creeping things innumerable, that I met with, because you do not suspect that this world is inhabited by anything but men, and women, and clergy, and such two-legged cattle. Now I am here again very disconsolate, and all alone, for Mr. Brown is gone, and the cares of this world are coming thick upon me; you, I hope, are better off, riding and walking in the woods of Studley, etc., etc. I must not wish for you here; besides I am going to town at Michaelmas, by no means for amusement.

THOMAS GRAY.

HORACE WALPOLE (1717-97)

HORACE WALPOLE, afterwards Earl of Orford, has been described as the "Prince of letter-writers." Judging by their number, the writing of letters seems to have been one of the chief occupations of his long life.

He was in touch with everything going on in the social and political world, and his letters give all the interesting news and gossip of the day, told in

Pudding sleeve. A sleeve of the full-dress clerical gown.

the most readable and humorous manner. They are therefore valuable pictures of society in the eighteenth century.

I

Sir Horace Mann, to whom this letter was written, was British Minister to the Court of Florence. Walpole corresponded regularly with him, keeping him informed about all the principal events at home.

NEWMARKET, *October 3, 1743.*

I am writing to you in an inn on the road to London. What a paradise should I have thought this when I was in the Italian inns! in a wide barn with four ample windows, which had nothing more like glass than shutters and iron bars! no tester to the bed, and the saddles and portmanteaus heaped on me to keep off the cold. What a paradise did I think the inn at Dover when I came back! and what magnificence were twopenny prints, salt-sellers, and boxes to hold the knives; but the *sumum bonum* was small-beer and the newspaper.

I bless'd my stars, and call'd it luxury!

Who was the Neapolitan ambassadress that could not live at Paris, because there was no macaroni? Now I am relapsed into all the dissatisfied repinement of a true English grumbling voluptuary. I could find in my heart to write a Craftsman against

the Government, because I am not quite so much at my ease as on my own sofa. I could persuade myself that it is my Lord Carteret's fault that I am only sitting in a common arm-chair, when I would be lolling in a *péché-mortel*. How dismal, how solitary, how scrub does this town look; and yet it has actually a street of houses better than Parma or Modena. Nay, the houses of the people of fashion who come hither for the races, are palaces to what houses in London itself were fifteen years ago. People do begin to live again now, and I suppose in a term we shall revert to York Houses, Clarendon Houses, etc. But from that grandeur all the nobility had contracted themselves to live in coops of a dining-room, a dark back-room, with one eye in a corner, and a closet. Think what London would be, if the chief houses were in it, as in the cities in other countries, and not dispersed like great rarity-plums in a vast pudding of country. Well, it is a tolerable place as it is! Were I a physician, I would prescribe nothing but recipe CCCLXV. drachm. Londin. Would you know why I like London so much? Why, if the world must consist of so many fools as it does, I choose to take them in the gross, and not made into separate pills, as they are prepared in the country. Besides, there is no being alone but in a metropolis: the worst place in the world to find solitude is the country: questions grow there, and that unpleasant Christian commodity, neighbours. Oh! They are all good Samaritans, and do so pour balms and

nostrums upon one, if one has but the toothache, or a journey to take, that they break one's head. A journey to take—ay! They talk over the miles to you, and tell you, you will be late in. My Lord Lovel says John always goes two hours in the dark in the morning to avoid being one hour in the dark in the evening. I was pressed to set out to-day before seven: I did before nine: and here am I arrived at a quarter past five, for the rest of the night.

I am more convinced every day, that there is not only no knowledge of the world out of a great city, but no decency, no practicable society—I had almost said, not a virtue. I will only instance in modesty, which all old Englishmen are persuaded cannot exist within the atmosphere of Middlesex. Lady Mary has a remarkable taste and knowledge of music, and can sing; I don't say, like your sister, but I am sure she would be ready to die if obliged to sing before three people, or before one with whom she is not intimate. The other day there came to see her a Norfolk heiress; the young gentlewoman had not been three hours in the house, and that for the first time of her life, before she notified her talent for singing, and invited herself up-stairs, to Lady Mary's harpsichord; where, with a voice like thunder, and with as little harmony, she sang to nine or ten people for an hour. "Was ever nymph like Rossymonde?"—no, d'honneur. We told her she had a very strong voice. "Lord, Sir! my master says it is nothing to

what it was." My dear child, she brags abominably; if it had been a thousandth degree louder, you must have heard it in Florence.

Adieu.

II

In this letter Walpole, in pretended indignation, thanks the Right Hon. Lady Hervey for a present of potted pilchards.

November 10, 1764.

Soh! Madam, you expect to be thanked because you have done a very obliging thing! But I won't thank you, and I won't be obliged. It is very hard one can't come into your house and commend anything, but you must recollect it and send it after one! I will never dine in your house again; and, when I do, I will like nothing; and when I do, I will commend nothing; and when I do, you shan't remember it. You are very grateful indeed to Providence that gave you so good a memory, to stuff it with nothing but bills of fare of what everybody likes to eat and drink! I wonder you are not ashamed—I wonder you are not ashamed! Do you think there is no such thing as gluttony of the memory?—You a Christian! A pretty account you will be able to give of yourself! Your fine folks in France may call this friendship and attention, per-

haps, but sure, if I was to go to the devil, it should be for thinking of nothing but myself, not of others, from morning to night. I would send back your temptations; but, as I will not be obliged to you for them, verily I shall retain them to punish you; ingratitude being a proper chastisement for sinful friendliness.

Thine in the spirit,

PILCHARD WHITFIELD.

III

This epistle was written to the Earl of Hertford. Walpole gives news of Parliament and describes eighteenth century fashions.

ARLINGTON STREET, *Feb. 12, 1765.*

A great many letters pass between us, my dear lord, but I think they are almost all of my writing. I have not heard from you this age. I sent you two packets together by Mr. Freeman, with an account of our chief debates. Since the long day, I have been much out of order with a cold and cough, that turned to a fever: I am now taking James's powder, not without apprehensions of the gout, which it gave me two or three years ago.

There has been nothing of note in Parliament but

Pilchard Whitfield. George Whitefield, 1714-70, a famous preacher of the eighteenth century. Working with Wesley he was one of the founders of the Methodist Church.

one slight day on the American taxes, which Charles Townshend supporting, received a pretty heavy thump from Barré, who is the present Pitt, and the dread of all the vociferous Norths and Rigbys, on whose lungs depended so much of Mr. Grenville's power. Do you never hear them to Paris?

The operations of the Opposition are suspended in compliment to Mr. Pitt, who has declared himself so warmly for the question on the Dismission of Officers, that that motion waits for his recovery. A call of the House is appointed for next Wednesday, but as he has had a relapse, the motion will probably be deferred. I should be very glad if it was to be dropped entirely for this session, but the young men are warm and not easily bridled.

If it was not too long to transcribe, I would send you an entertaining petition of the perriwig-makers to the King, in which they complain that men will wear their own hair. Should one almost wonder if carpenters were to remonstrate, that since the peace their trade decays, and that there is no demand for wooden legs? Apropos my Lady Hertford's friend, Lady Harriot Vernon, has quarrelled with me for smiling at the enormous head-gear of her daughter, Lady Grosvenor. She came one night to Northumberland-house with such display of friz, that it literally spread beyond her shoulders. I happened to say it looked as if her parents had stinted her in hair before marriage, and that she was determined to indulge her fancy now. This,

among ten thousand things said by all the world, was reported to Lady Harriot, and has occasioned my disgrace. As she never found fault with anybody herself, I excuse her! You will be less surprised to hear that the Duchess of Queensberry has not yet done dressing herself marvellously: she was at Court on Sunday in a gown and petticoat of red flannel. The same day the Guerchys made a dinner for her, and invited Lord and Lady Hyde, the Forbes, and her other particular friends: in the morning she sent word she was to go out of town, but as soon as dinner was over, arrived at Madame de Guerchy's, and said she had been at Court. . . .

OLIVER GOLDSMITH (1728-74)

GOLDSMITH was an Irishman. This letter itself would be evidence of the fact. It gives a humorous account of his adventures after his false start for America, and shows the careless, good-hearted spirit so commonly associated with his countrymen.

After many experiences somewhat like those described, he settled in London and achieved success in the world of literature, with his poems including *The Deserted Village*, his novel *The Vicar of Wakefield*, and his dramas *She Stoops to Conquer* and *The Good-Natured Man*.

MY DEAR MOTHER,

If you will sit down and calmly listen to what I say, you shall be fully resolved in every one of those many questions you have asked me. I went to Cork, and converted my horse, which you prize so much higher than Fiddle-back, into cash, took my passage in a ship bound for America, and, at the same time paid the captain for my freight and all the other expenses of my voyage. But it so happened that the wind did not answer for three weeks; and you know, mother, that I could not command the elements. My misfortune was, that, when the wind served, I happened to be with a party in the country, and my friend the captain never inquired after me, but set sail with as much indifference as if I had been on board. The remainder of my time I employed in the city and its environs, viewing everything curious, and you know no one can starve while he has money in his pocket.

Reduced, however, to my last two guineas, I began to think of my dear mother and friends whom I had left behind me, and so bought that generous beast Fiddle-back, and bade adieu to Cork with only five shillings in my pocket. This, to be sure, was but a scanty allowance for man and horse towards a journey of above a hundred miles; but I did not despair, for I knew I must find friends on the road.

I recollected particularly an old and faithful acquaintance I made at college, who had often and earnestly pressed me to spend a summer with him,

and he lived but eight miles from Cork. This circumstance of vicinity he would expatiate on to me with peculiar emphasis. "We shall," says he, "enjoy the delights of both city and country, and you shall command my stable and my purse."

However, upon the way, I met a poor woman all in tears, who told me her husband had been arrested for a debt he was not able to pay, and that his eight children must now starve, bereaved as they were of his industry, which had been their only support. I thought myself at home, being not far from my good friend's house, and therefore parted with a moiety of all my store; and, pray, mother, ought I not have given her the other half-crown, for what she got would be of little use to her? However, I soon arrived at the mansion of my affectionate friend, guarded by the vigilance of a huge mastiff, who flew at me, and would have torn me to pieces but for the assistance of a woman, whose countenance was not less grim than that of the dog; yet she with great humanity relieved me from the jaws of this Cerberus, and was prevailed on to carry up my name to her master.

Without suffering me to wait long, my old friend, who was then recovering from a severe fit of sickness, came down in his nightcap, nightgown and slippers, and embraced me with the most cordial welcome, showed me in, and, after giving me a

Cerberus. Cerberus in classical mythology is the watch-dog of the infernal regions.

history of his indisposition, assured me that he considered himself peculiarly fortunate in having under his roof the man he most loved on earth, and whose stay with him must, above all things, contribute to his perfect recovery. I now repented sorely I had not given the poor woman the other half-crown, as I thought all my bills of humanity would be punctually answered by this worthy man. I revealed to him all my distresses; and freely owned that I had but one half-crown in my pocket; but that now, like a ship after weathering out the storm, I considered myself secure in a safe and hospitable harbour. He made no answer, but walked about the room, rubbing his hands as one in deep study. This I imputed to the sympathetic feelings of a tender heart, which increased my esteem for him, and as that increased, I gave the most favourable interpretation to his silence. I construed it into delicacy of sentiment, as if he dreaded to wound my pride by expressing his commiseration in words, leaving his generous conduct to speak for itself.

It now approached six o'clock in the evening; and as I had eaten no breakfast, and as my spirits were raised, my appetite for dinner grew uncommonly keen. At length the old woman came into the room with two plates, one spoon, and a dirty cloth, which she laid upon the table. This appearance, without increasing my spirits, did not diminish my appetite. My protectress soon returned with a small bowl of sago, a small porringer of sour milk, a loaf of stale

brown bread, and the heel of an old cheese all over crawling with mites. My friend apologized that his illness obliged him to live on slops, and that better fare was not in the house; observing, at the same time, that a milk diet was certainly the most healthful; and at eight o'clock he again recommended a regular life, declaring that for his part he would lie down with the lamb and rise with the lark. My hunger was at this time so exceedingly sharp that I wished for another slice of the loaf, but was obliged to go to bed without even that refreshment.

This lenten entertainment I had received made me resolve to depart as soon as possible; accordingly, next morning, when I spoke of going, he did not oppose my resolution; he rather commended my design, adding some very sage counsel upon the occasion. "To be sure," said he, "the longer you stay away from your mother the more you will grieve her and your other friends; and possibly they are already afflicted at hearing of this foolish expedition you have made." Notwithstanding all this, and without any hope of softening such a sordid heart, I again renewed the tale of my distress, and asking "how he thought I could travel above a hundred miles upon one half-crown?" I begged to borrow a single guinea which I assured him should be repaid with thanks. "And you know, sir," said I, "it is no more than I have done for you." To which he firmly answered, "Why, look you, Mr. Goldsmith, that is neither here nor there, I have paid you all

you ever lent me, and this sickness of mine has left me bare of cash. But I have bethought myself of a conveyance for you; sell your horse, and I will furnish you a much better one to ride on." I readily grasped at his proposal, and begged to see the nag; on which he led me to his bed chamber, and from under the bed he pulled out a stout oak stick. "Here he is," said he; "take this in your hand, and it will carry you to your mother's with more safety than such a horse as you ride." I was in doubt, when I got it into my hand, whether I should not, in the first place apply it to his pate; but a rap at the street door made the wretch fly to it, and when I returned to the parlour, he introduced me, as if nothing of the kind had happened, to the gentleman who entered, as Mr. Goldsmith, his most ingenious and worthy friend, of whom he had so often heard him speak with rapture. I could scarcely compose myself; and must have betrayed indignation in my mien to the stranger, who was a counsellor-at-law in the neighbourhood, a man of engaging aspect and polite address.

After spending an hour, he asked my friend and me to dine with him at his house. This I declined at first, as I wished to have no further communication with my hospitable friend; but at the solicitation of both I at last consented, determined as I was by two motives; one, that I was prejudiced in favour of the looks and manner of the counsellor; and the other, that I stood in need of a comfortable dinner.

And there, indeed, I found everything that I could wish, abundance without profusion, and elegance without affectation. In the evening, when my old friend, who had eaten very plentifully at his neighbour's table, but talked again of lying down with the lamb, made a motion to me for retiring, our generous host requested I should take a bed with him, upon which I plainly told my old friend that he might go home and take care of the horse he had given me, but that I should never re-enter his doors. He went away with a laugh, leaving me to add this to the other little things the counsellor already knew of his plausible neighbour.

And now, my dear mother, I found sufficient to reconcile me to all my follies; for here I spent three whole days. The counsellor had two sweet girls to his daughters, who played enchantingly on the harpsichord; and yet it was but a melancholy pleasure I felt the first time I heard them: for that being the first time also that either of them had touched the instrument since their mother's death, I saw the tears in silence trickle down their father's cheeks. I every day endeavoured to go away, but every day was pressed and obliged to stay. On my going, the counsellor offered me his purse, with a horse and servant to convey me home: but the latter I declined, and only took a guinea to bear my necessary expenses on the road.

OLIVER GOLDSMITH.

To Mrs. Anne Goldsmith, Ballymahon.

WILLIAM COWPER (1731-1800)

WILLIAM COWPER, the poet, author of "The Task," "John Gilpin," and many other poems, was one of the very greatest among English letter-writers. Compelled by the state of his health to lead a retired life, he yet found, in the little incidents of every day, material for the most interesting letters. They are written in the best of English, and are models of what good letters should be—the nearest approach to the familiar conversation of friends.

I

This letter was written to his friend, the Rev. William Unwin, with whose family Cowper resided for a great part of his life.

OLNEY, *August 6, 1780.*

MY DEAR FRIEND,

You like to hear from me: this is a very good reason why I should write. But I have nothing to say: this seems equally a good reason why I should not. Yet if you had alighted from your horse at our door this morning, and at this present writing, being five o'clock in the afternoon, had found occasion to say to me—"Mr. Cowper, you have not spoken since I came in; have you resolved never to speak again?" it would be but a poor reply, if in answer to the

summons I should plead inability as my best and only excuse. And this, by the way, suggests to me a seasonable piece of instruction, and reminds me of what I am very apt to forget, when I have any epistolary business in hand, that a letter may be written upon anything or nothing, just as that anything or nothing happens to occur. A man that has a journey before him, twenty miles in length, which he is to perform on foot, will not hesitate and doubt whether he shall set out or not, because he does not readily conceive how he shall ever reach the end of it: for he knows, that by the simple operation of moving one foot forward first, and then the other, he shall be sure to accomplish it. So it is in the present case, and so it is in every similar case. A letter is written as a conversation is maintained, or a journey performed; not by preconcerted or premeditated means, a new contrivance, or an invention never heard of before, but merely by maintaining a progress, and resolving as a postilion does, having once set out, never to stop till we reach the appointed end. If a man may talk without thinking, why may he not write upon the same terms? A grave gentleman of the last century, a tie-wig, square-toe, Steinkirk figure, would say—"My good sir, a man has no right to do either." But it is to be hoped that the present century has nothing to do with the mouldy opinions of the last; and so good Sir Launcelot, or Sir Paul, or whatever be your name, step into your picture-frame again, and look

as if you thought for another century, and leave us moderns in the meantime to think when we can, and to write whether we can or not, else we might as well be dead as you are.

When we look back upon our forefathers, we seem to look back upon the people of another nation, almost upon creatures of another species. Their vast rambling mansions, spacious halls, and painted casements, the Gothic porch smothered with honeysuckles, their little gardens and high walls, their box-edgings, balls of holly, and yew-tree statues, are become so entirely unfashionable now, that we can hardly believe it possible that a people who resembled us so little in their taste should resemble us in anything else. But in everything else, I suppose, they were our counterparts exactly; and time, that has sewed up the slashed sleeve, and reduced the large trunk hose to a neat pair of silk stockings, has left human nature just where it found it. The inside of man at least has undergone no change. His passions, appetites, and aims are just what they ever were. They wear, perhaps, a handsomer disguise than they did in days of yore; for philosophy and literature will have their effect upon the exterior; but, in every other respect, a modern is only an ancient in a different dress.

W. C.

II

The Rev. John Newton, to whom this letter is addressed, was another of Cowper's closest friends. Some of the poet's most affectionate letters were written to him. Here we have an amusing description of an electioneering visit.

OLNEY, *March 29, 1784.*

MY DEAR FRIEND,

It being His Majesty's pleasure that I should yet have another opportunity to write before he dissolves the parliament, I avail myself of it with all possible alacrity. I thank you for your last, which was not the less welcome for coming, like an extraordinary gazette, at a time when it was not expected.

As when the sea is uncommonly agitated, the water finds its way into creeks and holes of rocks, which in its calmer state it never reaches, in like manner the effect of these turbulent times is felt even at Orchardside, where in general we live as undisturbed by the political element, as shrimps or cockles that have been accidentally deposited in some hollow beyond the water mark, by the usual dashing of the waves. We were sitting yesterday after dinner, the two ladies and myself, very composedly, and without the least apprehension of any such intrusion in our snug parlour, one lady knitting, the other netting, and the gentleman winding

worsted, when to our unspeakable surprise a mob appeared before the window; a smart rap was heard at the door, the boys hallooed and the maid announced Mr. Grenville. Puss was unfortunately let out of her box, so that the candidate, with all his good friends at his heels, was refused admittance at the grand entry, and referred to the back door as the only possible way of approach.

Candidates are creatures not very susceptible of affronts, and would rather, I suppose, climb in at a window than be absolutely excluded. In a minute, the yard, the kitchen, and the parlour were filled. Mr. Grenville, advancing towards me, shook me by the hand, with a degree of cordiality that was extremely seducing. As soon as he and as many more as could find chairs were seated, he began to open the intent of his visit. I told him I had no vote, for which he readily gave me credit. I assured him I had no influence, which he was not equally inclined to believe; and the less, no doubt, because Mr. Ashburner, addressing himself to me at this moment, informed me that I had a great deal. Supposing that I could not be possessed of such a treasure without knowing it, I ventured to confirm my first assertion, by saying, that if I had any I was utterly at a loss to imagine where it could be, or wherein it consisted. Thus ended the conference. Mr. Grenville squeezed me by the hand again, kissed the ladies, and with-

Puss. His tame hare.

Mr. Ashburner. A shopkeeper at Olney.

drew. He kissed likewise the maid in the kitchen, and seemed upon the whole a most loving, kissing, kind-hearted gentleman. He is very young, genteel, and handsome. He has a pair of very good eyes in his head, which not being sufficient as it should seem for the many nice and difficult purposes of a senator, he has a third also, which he wore suspended by a riband from his buttonhole. The boys hallooed, the dogs barked, Puss scampered, the hero, with his long train of obsequious followers, withdrew. We made ourselves very merry with the adventure, and in a short time settled into our former tranquillity, never, probably, to be thus interrupted more. I thought myself, however, happy in being able to affirm truly that I had not that influence for which he sued: and which, had I been possessed of it, with my present views of the dispute between the Crown and the Commons, I must have refused him, for he is on the side of the former. It is comfortable to be of no consequence in the world where one cannot exercise any without disobliging somebody. The town, however, seems to be much at his service; and if he be equally successful throughout the county, he will undoubtedly gain his election. Mr. Ashburner perhaps was a little mortified, because it was evident that I owed the honour of this visit to his misrepresentation of my importance. But had he thought proper to assure Mr. Grenville that I had three heads, I should not, I suppose, have been bound to produce them.

Mr. Scott, who you say was so much admired in your pulpit, would be equally admired in his own, at least by all capable judges, were he not so apt to be angry with his congregation. This hurts him, and had he the understanding and eloquence of Paul himself, would still hurt him. He seldom, hardly ever, indeed, preaches a gentle, well-tempered sermon, but I hear it highly commended: but warmth of temper, indulged to a degree that may be called scolding, defeats the end of preaching. It is a misapplication of his powers, which it also cripples, and teases away his hearers. But he is a good man, and may perhaps outgrow it.

W. C.

III

This letter is addressed to Lady Hesketh, Cowper's cousin. When ill-health compelled the poet to give up all thoughts of an active life, she showed the most unfailing kindness, and did much to lessen his sufferings and increase his comforts.

THE LODGE, *November 27, 1787.*

It is the part of wisdom, my dearest cousin, to sit down contented under the demands of necessity because they are such. I am sensible that you cannot, in my uncle's present infirm state, and of which it is

not possible to expect any considerable amendment, indulge either us or yourself with a journey to Weston.

On Monday morning last, Sam brought me word that there was a man in the kitchen who desired to speak with me. I ordered him in. A plain, decent, elderly figure made its appearance, and, being desired to sit, spoke as follows: "Sir, I am clerk of the parish of All Saints in Northampton; brother of Mr. Cox, the upholsterer. It is customary for the person in my office to annex to a bill of mortality, which he publishes at Christmas, a copy of verses. You will do me a great favour, Sir, if you would furnish me with one." To this I replied: "Mr. Cox, you have several men of genius in your town, why have you not applied to some of them? There is a namesake of yours in particular, Cox the statuary, who, everybody knows, is a first-rate maker of verses. He surely is the man of all the world for your purpose." "Alas! Sir, I have heretofore borrowed help from him; but he is a gentleman of so much reading that the people of our town cannot understand him." I confess to you, my dear, I felt all the force of the compliment implied in this speech, and was almost ready to answer, "Perhaps, my good friend, they may find me unintelligible too, for the same reason." But on asking him whether he had walked over to Weston on purpose to implore the assistance of my Muse, and on his replying in the affirmative, I felt my mortified vanity a little consoled, and pitying the poor man's distress, which appeared to be con-

siderable, promised to supply him. The wagon has accordingly gone this day to Northampton, loaded in part with my effusions in the mortuary style: a fig for poets who write epitaphs upon individuals! I have written *one* that serves *two hundred* persons.

A few days since I received a second very obliging letter from Mr. Mackenzie. He tells me that his own papers, which are by far, he is sorry to say it, the most numerous, are marked V.I.Z. Accordingly, my dear, I am happy to find that I am engaged in a correspondence with Mr. Viz, a gentleman for whom I have always entertained the profoundest veneration. But the serious fact is, that the papers distinguished by those signatures have ever pleased me most, and struck me as the work of a sensible man, who knows the world well, and has more of Addison's delicate humour than anybody.

A poor man begged food at the Hall lately. The cook gave him some vermicelli soup. He ladled it about some time with the spoon, and then he returned it to her, saying, "I am a poor man, it is true, and I am very hungry, but yet I cannot eat broth with maggots in it."

Once more, my dear, a thousand thanks for your box full of good things, useful things, and beautiful things.

Yours ever,

W. C.

Mr. Mackenzie. Author of The Man of Feeling.

LORD JEFFREY (1773-1850)

FRANCIS JEFFREY was for many years editor of the *Edinburgh Review*, and in this position had an enormous influence as a literary critic. He also gained a great reputation at the Bar, and became a Lord of the Court of Session.

This letter to a grandchild shows the more human and lovable side of the man who was respected and often feared as a severe critic.

CRAIGCROOK, *June 20, 1848.*

MY SONS NANCY!

I love you very much, and think very often of your dimples, and your pimples, and your funny little plays, and all your pretty ways; and I send you my blessing and wish I were kissing, your sweet rosy lips, or your fat finger-tips; and that you were here, so that I could hear you stammering words, from a mouthful of curds; and a great purple tongue (as broad as it's long); and see your round eyes, open wide with surprise, and your wondering look to find yourself at Craiggrook! To-morrow is Maggie's birthday, and we have built up a great bonfire in honour of it; and Maggie Rutherford (do you remember her at all?) is coming out to dance round it; and all the servants are to drink her health, and wish her many happy days with you and Frankie,—and all the mammays and pappys,

whether grand or not grand. We are very glad to hear that she and you love each other so well, and are happy in making each other happy; and that you do not forget dear Tarley or Frankie, when they are out of sight, nor Granny either,—or even old Granny pa, who is in most danger of being forgotten, he thinks. We have had showery weather here, but the garden is full of flowers; and Frankie has a new wheel-barrow, and does a great deal of work, and some mischief now and then. All the dogs are very well; and Foxey is mine, and Froggy is Tarley's, and Frankie has taken up with great white Neddy,—so that nothing is left for Granny but old barking Jacky and Dover when the carriage comes. The donkey sends his compliments to you, and maintains that you are a cousin of his! or a near relation, at all events. He wishes, too, that you and Maggie would come; for he thinks that you will not be so heavy on his back as Tarley and Maggie Rutherford, who now ride him without mercy.

This is Sunday, and Ali is at church—Granny and I taking care of Frankie till she comes back, and he is now hammering very busily at a corner of the carpet, which he says does not lie flat. He is very good, and really too pretty for a boy, though I think his two eyebrows are growing into one,—stretching and meeting each other above his nose! But he has not so many freckles as Tarley, who has a very fine crop of them, which she and I encourage as much as we can. I hope you and Maggie will

lay in a stock of them, as I think no little girl can be pretty without them in summer. Our pea-hens are suspected of having young families in some hidden place, for though they pay us short visits now and then, we see them but seldom, and always alone. If you and Maggie were here with your sharp eyes, we think you might find out their secret, and introduce us to a nice new family of young peas. The old papa cock, in the meantime says he knows nothing about them, and does not care a farthing! We envy you your peas of another kind, for we have none yet, nor any asparagus neither, and hope you will bring some down to us in your lap. Tarley sends her love, and I send mine to you all; though I shall think most of Maggie to-morrow morning, and of you when your birth morning comes. When is that do you know? It is never dark now here, and we might all go to bed without candles. And so bless you ever and ever, my dear dimply pussie,—

Your very loving

GRANDPA.

CHARLES LAMB (1775-1834)

LONDON, which has attracted to itself so many great men, had a peculiar fascination for Charles Lamb. A native of the city, he spent there his happiest days, and there he did his best work.

Literature was his recreation, and he soon became known as a critic, a poet, and above all as an essayist. The genial humour which makes his essays so attractive is even more evident in his letters, and he ranks among the three or four great letter-writers in English literature.

I

Lamb was fortunate in numbering amongst his friends the chief literary men of his day, and we meet them all in his letters. In this letter to Wordsworth it is interesting to compare the standpoint of the townsman with that of the great poet of nature.

January 30th, 1801.

I ought before this to have replied to your very kind invitation into Cumberland. With you and your sister I could gang anywhere; but I am afraid whether I shall ever be able to afford so desperate a journey. Separate from the pleasure of your company, I don't much care if I never see a mountain in my life. I have passed all my days in London, until I have formed as many and intense local attachments as any of you mountaineers can have done with dead Nature. The lighted shops of the Strand and Fleet Street; the innumerable trades, tradesmen, and customers, coaches, waggons, play-houses; all the bustle and wickedness round about

Covent Garden; the very women of the Town; the watchmen, drunken scenes, rattles; life awake, if you awake, at all hours of the night; the impossibility of being dull in Fleet Street; the crowds, the very dirt and mud, the sun shining upon houses and pavements, the print-shops, the old book-stalls, parsons cheapening books, coffee-houses, steams of soups from kitchens, the pantomimes—London itself a pantomime and a masquerade—all these things work themselves into my mind, and feed me, without a power of satiating me. The wonder of these sights impels me into night-walks about her crowded streets, and I often shed tears in the motley Strand from fulness of joy at so much life. All these emotions must be strange to you; so are your rural emotions to me. But consider, what must I have been doing all my life, not to have lent great portions of my heart with usury to such scenes?

My attachments are all local, purely local. I have no passion (or have had none since I was in love, and then it was the spurious engendering of poetry and books), for groves and valleys. The room where I was born, the furniture which has been before my eyes all my life, a book-case which has followed me about like a faithful dog (only exceeding him in knowledge), wherever I have moved, old chairs, old tables, streets, squares, where I have sunned myself, my old school,—these are my mistresses. Have I not enough, without your mountains? I do not envy you. I should pity you, did I not know that the

mind will make friends of any thing. Your sun, and moon, and skies, and hills, and lakes, affect me no more, or scarcely come to me in more venerable characters, than as a gilded room with tapestry and tapers, where I might live with handsome visible objects. I consider the clouds above me but as a roof beautifully painted, but unable to satisfy the mind: and at last, like the pictures of the apartment of a connoisseur, unable to afford him any longer a pleasure. So fading upon me, from disuse, have been the beauties of Nature, as they have been confinedly called; so ever fresh, and green, and warm are all the inventions of men, and assemblies of men in this great city. I should certainly have laughed with dear Joanna.

Give my kindest love, and my sister's to D. and yourself; and a kiss from me to little Barbara Lewthwaite. Thank you for liking my play,

C. L.

II

Coleridge and Lamb were school fellows and their early friendship lasted all their lives. Many of Lamb's most interesting letters were written to Coleridge.

This quaint and amusing letter is doubly interesting as it contains the germ of the entertaining "Dissertation on Roast Pig."

DEAR COLERIDGE,

March 9, 1822.

It gives me great satisfaction to hear that the pig turned out so well; they are interesting creatures at a certain age. What a pity such buds should blow out into the maturity of rank bacon! You had all some of the crackling and brain sauce. Did you remember to rub it with butter, and gently dredge it a little, just before the crisis? Did the eyes come away kindly with no *Œdipean* avulsion?* Was the crackling the colour of the ripe pomegranate? Had you no complement of boiled neck of mutton before it, to blunt the edge of delicate desire? Did you flesh maiden teeth in it? Not that I sent the pig, or can form the remotest guess what part Owen could play in the business. I never knew him give anything away in my life. He would not begin with strangers. I suspect the pig, after all, was meant for me; but at the unlucky juncture of time being absent, the present somehow went round to Highgate. To confess an honest truth, a pig is one of those things which I could never think of sending away. Teal, widgeon, snipes, barn-door fowls, ducks, geese—your tame villatic things—Welsh mutton, collars of brawn, sturgeon, fresh or pickled, your

**Œdipus* was a legendary king of Thebes in Greece. Unaware of his parentage, he killed his father and so obtained the throne. When he learned the full facts he put out his eyes and left Thebes as a poor wanderer.

Œdipean avulsion. Tearing out after the manner of *Œdipus*.

potted char, Swiss cheeses, French pies, early grapes, muscadines, I impart as freely unto my friends as to myself. They are but self-extended: but pardon me if I stop somewhere. Where the fine feeling of benevolence giveth a higher smack than the sensual rarity, there my friends (or any good man) may command me; but pigs are pigs, and I myself therein am nearest to myself. Nay, I should think it an affront, an undervaluing done to Nature who bestowed such a boon upon me, if in a churlish mood I parted with the precious gift. One of the bitterest pangs of remorse I ever felt was when a child—when my kind old aunt had strained her pocket strings to bestow a sixpenny whole plum cake upon me. In my way home through the Borough I met a venerable old man, not a mendicant, but thereabouts; a look-beggar, not a verbal petitioner; and in the coxcombry of taught charity I gave away the cake to him. I walked on a little in all the pride of an Evangelical peacock, when of a sudden my old aunt's kindness crossed me; the sum it was to her; the pleasure she had a right to expect that I—not the old impostor—should take in eating her cake; the ingratitude by which, under the colour of a Christian virtue, I had frustrated her cherished purpose. I sobbed, wept, and took it to heart so grievously, that I think I never suffered the like; and I was right. It was a piece of unfeeling hypocrisy, and it proved a lesson to me ever after. The cake has long been masticated, consigned to the dunghill with the ashes of that unseasonable pauper.

But when Providence, who is better to us all than our aunts, gives me a pig, remembering my temptation and my fall, I shall endeavour to act towards it more in the spirit of the donor's purpose.

Yours (short of pig) to command in every thing.

C. L.

III

The spirit in which this letter was written can best be described in Lamb's own words, "jolly and freakish." It is addressed to J. B. Dibdin, grandson of Charles Dibdin, the writer of sea-songs.

Dibdin was on holiday, and Lamb in jesting mood wrote him this "cheerful" letter.

Saturday, September 9, 1826.

An answer is requested.

DEAR D.,

I have observed that a letter is never more acceptable than when received upon a rainy day, especially a rainy Sunday; which moves me to send you somewhat, however short. This will find you sitting after Breakfast, which you will have prolonged as far as you can with consistency to the poor handmaid that has the reversion of the Tea-Leaves; making two nibbles of your last morsel of stale roll (you cannot have hot new ones on the

Sabbath) and reluctantly coming to an end, because when that is done, what can you do till dinner? You cannot go to the Beach, for the rain is drowning the sea, turning rank Thetis fresh, taking the brine out of Neptune's pickles, while mermaids sit upon rocks with umbrellas, their ivory combs sheathed for spoiling in the wet of waters foreign to them. You cannot go into the library, for it's shut. You are not religious enough to go to church. O it is worth while to cultivate piety to the gods, to have something to fill up the heart on a wet Sunday! You cannot cast accounts, for your ledger is being eaten with moths in the Ancient Jewry. You cannot play at draughts, for there is none to play with you, and besides there is not a draught-board in the house. You cannot go to market, for it closed last night. You cannot look into the shops, their backs are shut upon you. You cannot read the Bible, for it is not good reading for the sick and the hypochondriacal. You cannot while away an hour with a friend, for you have no friend round that Wrekin. You cannot divert yourself with a stray acquaintance, for you have picked none up. You cannot bear the chiming of Bells, for they invite you to a banquet where you are no visitant. You cannot cheer yourself with the prospect of to-morrow's letter, for none come on Mondays. You cannot count those endless vials on the mantelpiece with any hope of making a variation in their numbers.

Thetis. A sea-nymph of Greek mythology, mother of Achilles. Here, of course, it means the sea.

You have counted your spiders: your Bastile is exhausted. You sit and deliberately curse your hard exile from all familiar sights and sounds. Old Ranking, poking in his head unexpectedly would just now be as good to you as Grimaldi. Anything to deliver you from this intolerable weight of Ennui. You are too ill to shake it off; not ill enough to submit to it, and to lie down as a lamb under it. The Tyranny of sickness is nothing to the Cruelty of Convalescence: 'tis to have Thirty Tyrants for one. That pattering rain drops on your brain. You'll be worse after dinner, for you must dine at one to-day, that Betty may go to afternoon service. She insists upon having her chopped hay. And then when she goes out, who was something to you, something to speak to—what an interminable afternoon you'll have to go thro'. You can't break yourself from your locality; you cannot say, "to-morrow I set off for Banstead, by God": for you are booked for Wednesday. Forseeing this, I thought a cheerful letter would come in opportunely. If any of the little topics for mirth I have thought upon should serve you in this utter extinguishment of sunshine, to make you a little merry, I shall have had my ends. I love to make things comfortable. . . . This, which is scratched out was the most material thing I had to say, but on maturer thoughts I defer it.

P.S.—We are just sitting down to dinner with a pleasant party, Coleridge, Reynolds the dramatist, *Grimaldi*. A famous clown.

and Sam Bloxam: to-morrow (that is to-day), Liston, and Wyatt of the Wells, dine with us. May this find you as jolly and freakish as we mean to be.

C. LAMB.

LEIGH HUNT (1784-1859)

LEIGH HUNT was a journalist, a poet and an essayist. While editor of a paper called *The Examiner* he was imprisoned for the opinions he expressed regarding the Prince of Wales.

This prosecution brought him the sympathy of Shelley, the poet, who became his closest friend and assisted him in many ways. Shelley's death left him stranded in Italy, and as soon as possible he returned to England.

A pension granted him by Shelley's widow in 1844 enabled him to spend his later years in comparative comfort.

The following letter was written to Mr. and Mrs. Shelley.

8 YORK BUILDINGS, NEW ROAD,

August, 1819.

MY DEAR FRIENDS,

Whenever I write to you, I seem to be transported to your presence. I dart out of the window like a bird, dash into a south-western current of air, skim over the cool waters, hurry over the basking

lands, rise like a lark over the mountains, fling like a swallow into the vallies, skim again, pant for breath, there's Leghorn—eccomi! how d'ye do?

I wish you would encourage my epistolary interviews by writing to me every Monday morning: I would write on the same day myself—say at nine o'clock: and then we should have the additional pleasure of knowing that we were occupied on the very same thoughts, and almost chatting together. I will begin the system, at any rate: and if you do not help me to go on with it, why, I will heap Christian coals of fire on your heads by endeavouring to go on without you. There is the same continued sunshine this season as last year. Every Saturday, when I go to office, I seem to walk through vallies of burning bricks, the streets and pavement are so intensely hot: but, then, there is a perpetual fanning of fresh air in the fields, and you may imagine I am oftener there. Sometimes I ramble about in them, sometimes take my meals, sometimes lie down and read. The other day I had a delicious sleep in a haycock. These green fields and blue skies throw me into a kind of placid intoxication. Are there many moments more delicious than the one in which you feel yourself going to slumber, with the sense of green about you, of an air in your face, and of the great sky arching over your head? One feels, at such times, all the grandeur of planetary consciousness without the pain of it. You know what I mean. There is a sort of kind and beautiful sensuality in it which softens the cuts and

oppressiveness of intellectual perception. Certainly, a country so green as England cannot well be equalled by any other at such a season: and did not the less pleasant causes of that green return, I should try my utmost to induce you to come back again: for, at this identical moment, I do not think you would be more comfortable anywhere than in such a place, with a book or two, a basket of fruit, and (O vain, flattered friend!) Leigh Hunt. Shelley does indeed flatter me, when he writes to me as the "best friend" he has left behind. I heartily wish he had any better, for I am sure that they would go through a dozen fires for him: and, as for that matter, so would I. In no race of friendship would I be the last, if my heart broke for it at the goal. But enough of this at present. Pray do not let Shelley be uneasy about my pecuniary affairs. It was he that enabled me to throw off the weight of them at first, and I should think it an ill return if I did not at least exert all the faculties which he set free. . . . I guess, by Shelley's questions about the Euganean Hills, that he has not seen my criticism yet in the *Examiner*, for surely I spoke there of a poem which I admire beyond measure, for thought, imagination, music, everything. He has a great admirer here from the Lakes, who has come to London for his health—Lloyd, one of the earliest Lake poets. More of him in my next. God thrice bless you, Shelley mio, Marina mia.

Ever most affectionately yours,

LEIGH HUNT.

WILLIAM HAZLITT (1778-1830)

WILLIAM HAZLITT is one of our pleasantest writers of essays and literary criticism. The following is a portion of a long letter written to his son at school.

MY DEAR LITTLE FELLOW,—

You are now going to settle at school, and may consider this as your first entrance into the world. As my health is so indifferent, and I may not be with you long, I wish to leave you some advice (the best I can) for your conduct in life, both that it may be of use to you, and as something to remember me by. I may at least be able to caution you against my own errors, if nothing else.

As we went along to your new place of destination, you often repeated that you durst say that they were a set of stupid, disagreeable people, meaning the people at the school. You were to blame in this. It is a good old rule to hope for the best. Always, my dear, believe things to be right till you find them the contrary ; and even then, instead of irritating yourself against them, endeavour to put up with them as well as you can, if you cannot alter them. You said you were sure you should not like the school where you were going. This was wrong. What you meant was that you did not like to leave home. But you could not tell whether you should like the school or not, till you had given it a trial. Otherwise, your saying

that you should not like it was determining that you would not like it. Never anticipate evils ; or, because you cannot have things exactly as you wish, make them out worse than they are, through mere spite and wilfulness.

You seemed at first to take no notice of your school-fellows, or rather to set yourself against them, because they were strangers to you. They knew as little of you as you did of them ; so that this would have been a reason for their keeping aloof from you as well, which you would have felt as a hardship. Learn never to conceive a prejudice against others because you know nothing of them. It is bad reasoning, and makes enemies of half the world. Do not think ill of them till they behave ill to you ; and then strive to avoid the faults which you see in them. This will disarm their hostility sooner than pique or resentment or complaint.

I thought you were disposed to criticize the dress of some of the boys as not so good as your own. Never despise anyone for anything that he cannot help—least of all, for his poverty. I would wish you to keep up appearances yourself as a defence against the idle sneers of the world, but I would not have you value yourself upon them. I hope you will neither be the dupe nor victim of vulgar prejudices. Instead of saying above, " Never despise anyone for anything that he cannot help," I might have said, " Never despise anyone at all " ; for contempt implies a triumph over and pleasure in the ill of another. It

means that you are glad and congratulate yourself on their failings or misfortunes.

You complain since, that the boys laugh at you and do not care about you, and that you are not treated as you were at home. My dear, that is one chief reason for you being sent to school, to inure you betimes to the unavoidable rubs and uncertain reception you may meet with in life. You cannot always be with me, and perhaps it is as well that you cannot. But you must not expect others to show the same concern about you as I should. You have hitherto been a spoiled child, and have been used to have your own way a good deal, both in the house and among your playfellows, with whom you were too fond of being a leader ; but you have good-nature and good sense, and will get the better of this in time. You have now got among other boys who are your equals, or bigger and stronger than yourself, and who have something else to attend to besides humouring your whims and fancies, and you feel this as a repulse or piece of injustice. But the first lesson to learn is that there are other people in the world besides yourself.

There are a number of boys in the school where you are, whose amusements and pursuits (whatever they may be) are and ought to be of as much consequence to them as yours can be to you, and to which therefore you must give way in your turn. The more airs of childish self-importance you give yourself, you will only expose yourself to be the more thwarted and laughed at. True equality is the only true morality

or true wisdom. Remember always that you are but one among others, and you can hardly mistake your place in society. In your father's house you might do as you pleased : in the world you will find competitors at every turn. You are not born a king's son, to destroy or dictate to millions ; you can only expect to share their fate, or settle your differences amicably with them. You already find it so at school, and I wish you to be reconciled to your situation as soon and with as little pain as you can.

I am, dear little fellow,

Your affectionate father,

W. HAZLITT.

LORD BYRON (1788-1824)

LORD BYRON is too interested in Lord Byron to be an ideal letter-writer ; but those who admire the man and his work will find in his letters a mine of information. Written with distinction and charm they give a full account of his travels and the various incidents of his erratic life.

PREVESA, *November 12, 1809.*

MY DEAR MOTHER,

I have now been some time in Turkey. This place is on the coast, but I have traversed the interior of the province of Albania on a visit to the Pacha. I

left Malta in the *Spider*, a brig of war, on the 21st of September, and arrived in eight days at Prevesa. I thence have been about 150 miles, as far as Tepaleen his Highness' country palace, where I stayed three days. The name of the Pacha is Ali, and he is considered a man of the first abilities. He governs the whole of Albania (the ancient Illyricum), Epirus, and part of Macedonia. His son, Vely Pacha, to whom he has given me letters, governs the Morea, and has great influence in Egypt; in short, he is one of the most powerful men in the Ottoman empire. When I reached Yanina, the capital, after a journey of three days over the mountains, through a country of the most picturesque beauty, I found that Ali Pacha was with his army in Illyricum, besieging Ibrahim Pacha in the castle of Berat. He had heard that an Englishman of rank was in his dominions, and had left orders in Yanina with the commandant to provide a house, and supply me with every kind of necessary gratis; and, though I have been allowed to make presents to the slaves, etc., I have not been permitted to pay for a single article of household consumption.

I rode out on the vizier's horses, and saw the palaces of himself and grandsons; they are splendid, but too much ornamented with silk and gold. I then went over the mountains through Zitza, a village with a Greek monastery (where I slept on my return), in the most beautiful situation (always excepting Cintra, in Portugal) I ever beheld. In nine days I reached Tepaleen. Our journey was much prolonged by the

torrents that had fallen from the mountains, and intersected the roads. I shall never forget the singular scene on entering Tepaleen at five in the afternoon, as the sun was going down. It brought to my mind (with some change of dress, however) Scott's description of Branksome in his *Lay* and the feudal system. The Albanians in their dresses (the most magnificent in the world, consisting of a long white kilt, gold-worked cloak, crimson velvet gold-laced jacket and waistcoat, silver-mounted pistols and daggers), the Tartars with their high caps, the Turks in their vast pelisses and turbans, the soldiers and black slaves with the horses, the former in groups in an immense large open gallery in front of the palace, the latter placed in a kind of cloister below it, two hundred steeds ready caparisoned to move in a moment, couriers entering or passing out with the despatches, the kettle-drums beating, boys calling the hour from the minaret of the mosque, altogether, with the singular appearance of the building itself, formed a new and delightful spectacle to a stranger. I was conducted to a very handsome apartment, and my health inquired after by the vizier's secretary, *à-la-mode Turque*!

The next day I was introduced to Ali Pacha. I was dressed in a full suit of staff uniform, with a very magnificent sabre, etc. The vizier received me in a large room paved with marble; a fountain was playing in the centre; the apartment was surrounded by scarlet ottomans. He received me standing, a won-

derful compliment from a Mussulman, and made me sit down on his right hand. I have a Greek interpreter for general use, but a physician of Ali's named Femlario, who understands Latin, acted for me on this occasion. His first question was, why, at so early an age, I left my country? (The Turks have no idea of travelling for amusement.) He then said the English minister, Captain Leake, had told him I was of a great family, and desired his respects to my mother; which I now, in the name of Ali Pacha, present to you. He said he was certain I was a man of birth, because I had small ears, curling hair, and little white hands, and expressed himself pleased with my appearance and garb. He told me to consider him as a father whilst I was in Turkey, and said he looked on me as his son. Indeed, he treated me like a child, sending me almonds and sugared sherbet, fruit and sweetmeats, twenty times a day. He begged me to visit him often, and at night, when he was at leisure. I then, after coffee and pipes, retired for the first time. I saw him thrice afterwards. It is singular that the Turks, who have no hereditary dignities, and few great families, except the sultans, pay so much respect to birth; for I found my pedigree more regarded than my title.

To-day I saw the remains of the town of Actium, near which Antony lost the world, in a small bay, where two frigates could hardly manœuvre: a broken wall is the sole remnant. On another part of the gulf stands the ruins of Nicopolis, built by Augustus

in honour of his victory. Last night I was at a Greek marriage; but this and a thousand things more I have neither time nor space to describe.

I am going to-morrow, with a guard of fifty men, to Patras in the Morea, and thence to Athens, where I shall winter. Two days ago I was nearly lost in a Turkish ship of war, owing to the ignorance of the captain and crew, though the storm was not violent. Fletcher yelled after his wife, the Greeks called on all the saints, the Mussulmans on Alla; the captain burst into tears, and ran below deck, telling us to call on God; the sails were split, the mainyard shivered, the wind blowing fresh, the night setting in, and all our chance was to make Corfu which is in possession of the French, or (as Fletcher pathetically termed it) "a watery grave." I did what I could to console Fletcher, but finding him incorrigible, wrapped myself up in my Albanian capote (an immense cloak) and lay down on deck to wait the worst. I have learnt to philosophize in my travels; and if I had not, complaint was useless. Luckily the wind abated, and only drove us on the coast of Suli, on the mainland, where we landed, and proceeded by the help of the natives, to Prevesa again; but I shall not trust Turkish sailors in future, though the Pacha had ordered one of his own galliots to take me to Patras. I am therefore going as far as Missolonghi by land, and there have only to cross a small gulf to get to Patras.

Fletcher's next epistle will be full of marvels. We

were one night lost for nine hours in the mountains in a thunder-storm, and since nearly wrecked. In both cases Fletcher was sorely bewildered, from apprehensions of famine and banditti in the first, and drowning in the second instance. His eyes were a little hurt by the lightning, or crying (I don't know which), but are now recovered. When you write, address to me at Mr. Strane's, English Consul, Patras, Morea.

I could tell you I know not how many incidents that I think would amuse you, but they crowd on my mind as much as they would swell my paper, and I can neither arrange them in the one, nor put them down on the other, except in the greatest confusion. I like the Albanians much; they are not all Turks; some tribes are Christians. But their religion makes little difference in manner or conduct. They are esteemed the best troops in the Turkish service. I lived on my route, two days at once, and three days again, in a barrack at Salora, and never found soldiers so tolerable, though I have been in the garrisons of Gibraltar and Malta, and seen Spanish, French, Sicilian and British troops in abundance. I have had nothing stolen, and was always welcome to their provision and milk. Not a week ago an Albanian chief (every village has its chief, who is called Primate), after helping us out of the Turkish galley in her distress, feeding us, and lodging my suite, consisting of Fletcher, a Greek, two Athenians, a Greek priest, and my companion,

Mr. Hobhouse, refused any compensation but a written paper stating that I was well received; and when I pressed him to accept a few sequins, "No," he replied, "I wish you to love me, not to pay me." These are his words.

It is astonishing how far money goes in this country. While I was in the capital I had nothing to pay by the vizier's order; but since, though I have generally had sixteen horses, and generally six or seven men, the expense has not been half as much as staying only three weeks in Malta, though Sir A. Ball, the governor, gave me a house for nothing, and I had only one servant. By the bye, I expect Hanson to remit regularly: for I am not about to stay in this province for ever. Let him write to me at Mr. Strane's, English Consul, Patras. The fact is, the fertility of the plains is wonderful, and specie is scarce, which makes this remarkable cheapness. I am going to Athens, to study modern Greek, which differs much from the ancient, though radically similar. I have no desire to return to England, nor shall I, unless compelled by absolute want, and Hanson's neglect; but I shall not enter into Asia for a year or two, as I have much to see in Greece, and I may perhaps cross into Africa, at least the Egyptian part. Fletcher, like all Englishmen, is very much dissatisfied, though a little reconciled to the Turks by a present of eighty piastres from the Vizier, which, if you consider everything, and the value of specie here, is nearly worth ten guineas

English. He has suffered nothing but from cold, heat, and vermin, which those who lie in cottages and cross mountains in a cold country must undergo, and of which I have equally partaken with himself; but he is not valiant, and is afraid of robbers and tempests. I have no one to be remembered to in England, and wish to hear nothing from it, but that you are well, and a letter or two on business from Hanson, whom you may tell to write. I will write when I can, and beg you to believe me,

Your affectionate son,

BYRON.

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY (1792-1822)

THE letters of Shelley give one a higher idea of the man than any biography. In spite of his youthful follies he shows himself a man of high ideals and generous nature.

The genius of his poetry is seen also in his letters, especially those from abroad.

I

The following letters describing his travels in Italy were written to Thomas Love Peacock, the poet.

BAGNI DI LUCCA, *July 25, 1818.*

MY DEAR PEACOCK,

I received on the same day your letters marked 5 and 6, the one directed to Pisa, and the other to Livorno, and I can assure you that they are most welcome visitors.

Our life here is as unvaried by any external events as if we were at Marlow, where a sail up the river or a journey to London makes an epoch. Since I last wrote to you, I have ridden over to Lucca, once with Clare, and once alone; and we have been over to the Casino, where I cannot say there is anything remarkable, the women being far removed from anything which the most liberal annotator could interpret into beauty or grace, and apparently possessing no intellectual excellencies to compensate the deficiency. The atmosphere here, unlike that of the rest of Italy, is diversified with clouds, which grow in the middle of the day, and sometimes bring thunder and lightning, and hail about the size of a pigeon's egg, and decrease towards the evening, leaving only those finely woven webs of vapour which we see in English skies, and flocks of fleecy and slowly-moving clouds, which all vanish before sunset; and the nights are for ever serene, and we see a star in the east at sunset—I think it is Jupiter—almost as fine as Venus was last summer; but it wants a certain silver and aerial radiance, and soft yet piercing splendour, which belongs, I suppose, to

the latter planet by virtue of its at once divine and female nature. I have forgotten to ask the ladies if Jupiter produces on them the same effect. I take great delight in watching the changes of the atmosphere. In the evening Mary and I often take a ride, for horses are cheap in this country. In the middle of the day, I bathe in a pool or fountain, formed in the middle of the forests by a torrent. It is surrounded on all sides by precipitous rocks, and the waterfall of the stream which forms it falls into it on one side with perpetual dashing. Close to it, on the top of the rocks, are alders, and above the great chestnut trees, whose long and pointed leaves pierce the deep blue sky in strong relief. The water of this pool which, to venture an unrhythmical paraphrase, is "sixteen feet long and ten feet wide," is as transparent as the air, so that the stones and sand at the bottom seem, as it were, trembling in the light of noonday. It is exceedingly cold also. My custom is to undress, and sit on the rocks, reading Herodotus, until the perspiration has subsided, and then to leap from the edge of the rock into this fountain—a practice in the hot weather excessively refreshing. This torrent is composed, as it were, of a succession of pools and waterfalls, up which I sometimes amuse myself by climbing when I bathe, and receiving the spray over all my body, whilst I clamber up the moist crags with difficulty.

What pleasure would it have given me if the wings of imagination could have divided the space which

divides us, and I could have been of your party. I have seen nothing so beautiful as Virginia Water—in its kind. And my thoughts for ever cling to Windsor Forest, and the copses of Marlow, like the clouds which hang upon the woods of the mountains, low trailing, and though they pass away, leave their best dew when they themselves have faded.

II

*To Thomas Love Peacock.—Venice.—Palaces and
Dungeons.*

[I CAPPUCCINI], ESTE, *October 8, 1818.*

MY DEAR PEACOCK,

I have not written to you, I think, for six weeks. But I have been on the point of writing many times, and have often felt that I had many things to say. But I have not been without events to disturb and distract me, amongst which is the death of my little girl. She died of a disorder peculiar to the climate. We have all had bad spirits enough, and I, in addition, bad health. I intend to be better soon: there is no malady, bodily or mental, which does not either kill or is killed.

We left the Baths of Lucca, I think, the day after I wrote to you [Monday, August 17th]—on a visit to Venice—partly for the sake of seeing the city.

We made a very delightful acquaintance there with a Mr. and Mrs. Hoppner, the gentleman an Englishman, and the lady a Swissesse, mild and beautiful, and unprejudiced in the best sense of the word. The kind attentions of these people made our short stay at Venice very pleasant. I saw Lord Byron, and really hardly knew him again; he is changed into the liveliest and happiest-looking man I ever met.

Venice is a wonderfully fine city. The approach to it over the laguna, with its domes and turrets glittering in a long line over the blue waves, is one of the finest architectural delusions in the world. It seems to have—and literally it has—its foundations in the sea. The silent streets are paved with water, and you hear nothing but the dashing of the oars, and the occasional cries of the gondolieri. I heard nothing of Tasso. The gondolas themselves are things of a most romantic and picturesque appearance; I can only compare them to moths of which a coffin might have been the chrysalis. They are hung with black, and painted black, and carpeted with grey; they curl at the prow and stern, and at the former there is a nondescript beak of shining steel which glitters at the end of its long black mass.

The Doge's palace, with its library, is a fine monument of aristocratic power. I saw the dungeons, where these scoundrels used to torment their victims. They are of three kinds—one adjoining the place of

Tasso. From the gondolieri, who are in the habit of reciting Tasso.

trial, where the prisoners destined to immediate execution were kept. I could not descend into them, because the day on which I visited it was festa. Another under the leads of the palace, where the sufferers were roasted to death or madness by the ardours of an Italian sun; and others called the Pozzi—or wells, deep underneath, and communicating with those on the roof by secret passages—where the prisoners were confined sometimes half up to their middles in stinking water. When the French came here, they found only one old man in the dungeons, and he could not speak. But Venice, which was once a tyrant, is now the next worse thing, a slave; for in fact it ceased to be free or worth our regret as a nation, from the moment that the oligarchy usurped the rights of the people. Yet, I do not imagine that it was ever so degraded as it has been since the French, and especially the Austrian yoke. The Austrians take sixty per cent. in taxes, and impose free quarters on the inhabitants. A horde of German soldiers, as vicious and more disgusting than the Venetians themselves, insult these miserable people. I had no conception of the excess to which avarice, cowardice, superstition, ignorance, passionless lust, and all the inexpressible brutalities which degrade human nature, could be carried, until I had passed a few days at Venice.

We have been living this last month near the little town from which I date this letter, in a very pleasant villa which has been lent to us, and we are now on the

point of proceeding to Florence, Rome and Naples—at which last city we shall spend the winter and return northwards in the spring. Behind us here are the Euganean hills, not so beautiful as those of the Bagni di Lucca, with Arqua, where Petrarch's house and tomb are religiously preserved and visited. At the end of our garden is an extensive Gothic castle, now the habitation of owls and bats, where the Medici family resided before they came to Florence. We see before us the wide flat plains of Lombardy, in which we see the sun and moon rise and set, and the evening star, and all the golden magnificence of autumnal clouds. But I reserve wonder for Naples.

Yours ever faithfully,

P. B. S.

JOHN KEATS (1795-1821)

KEATS, like Shelley and Byron, the other great poets of his time, had a short life. He died in Italy at the age of twenty-six.

In his letters are to be found the best character portraits of the poet. Here we have his description of a visit to Burns' birthplace, while on a walking tour in Scotland.

MAYBOLE, *July* 11, 1818.

MY DEAR REYNOLDS,

I'll not run over the ground we have passed; that would be nearly as bad as telling a dream—unless, perhaps, I do it in the manner of the Laputan printing press; that is, I put down mountains, rivers, lakes, dells, glens, rocks, with beautiful, enchanting, gothic, picturesque, fine; delightful, enchanting, sublime—a few blisters, etc.—and now you have our journey thus far; where I begin a letter to you because I am approaching Burns' cottage very fast. We have made continual inquiries from the time we left his tomb at Dumfries. His name, of course, is known all about; his great reputation among all the plodding people is "that he wrote a good many sensible things." One of the pleasantest ways of annulling self is approaching such a shrine as the cottage of Burns: we need not think of his misery—that is all gone, bad luck to it! I shall look upon it hereafter with unmixed pleasure, as I do on my Stratford-on-Avon day with Bailey. I shall fill this sheet for you in the Bardie's country, going no farther than this, till I get to the town of Ayr, which will be a nine miles' to tea.

We were talking on different and indifferent things, when, on a sudden, we turned a corner upon the immediate country of Ayr. The sight was as rich as possible. I had no conception that the native place of Burns was so beautiful; the idea I had was more

desolate: his "Rigs of Barley" seemed always to me but a few strips of green on a cold hill—Oh, prejudice!—It was as rich as Devon. I endeavoured to drink in the prospect that I might spin it out to you, as the silk-worms make silk from mulberry leaves. I cannot recollect it. Besides all the beauty, there were the mountains of Arran Isle, black and huge over the sea. We came down upon everything suddenly; there were in our way the "bonny Doon" with the brig that Tam o' Shanter crossed, Kirk Alloway, Burns' Cottage, and then the Brigs of Ayr. First we stood upon the bridge across the Doon, surrounded by every phantasy of green in tree, meadow and hill; the stream of the Doon, as a farmer told us, is covered with trees "from head to foot." You know those beautiful heaths, so fresh against the weather of a summer's evening; there was one stretching along behind the trees.

I wish I knew always the humour my friends would be in at opening a letter of mine, to suit it to them as nearly as possible. I could always find an egg-shell for melancholy, and, as for merriment, a witty humour will turn anything to account. My head is sometimes in such a whirl in considering the million likings and antipathies of our moments, that I can get into no settled strain in my letters. . . .

We went to Kirk Alloway. "A prophet is no prophet in his own country." We went to the Cottage and took some whisky. I wrote a sonnet for the mere sake of writing some lines under the roof; they are so

bad I cannot transcribe them. The man at the cottage was a great bore with his anecdotes. I hate the rascal. His life consists in fuzy, fuzzy, fuzziest. He drinks glasses five for the quarter and twelve for the hour: he is a mahogany-faced old jackass who knew Burns; he ought to have been kicked for having spoken to him. . . .

My dear Reynolds, I cannot write about scenery and visitings. Fancy is indeed less than present palpable reality, but it is greater than remembrance. You would lift your eyes from Homer only to see close before you the real Isle of Tenedos. You would rather read Homer afterwards than remember yourself. One song of Burns's is of more worth to you than all I could think for a whole year in his native country. His misery is a dead weight upon the nimbleness of one's quill; I tried to forget it—to drink toddy without any care—to write a merry sonnet—it won't do—he talked, he drank with blackguards; he was miserable. We can see horribly clear, in the works of such a man, his whole life, as if we were God's spies. . . .

The rain has stopped us to-day at the end of a dozen miles, yet we hope to see Loch Lomond the day after to-morrow; . . .

We bear the fatigue very well—twenty miles a day in general.

A cloud came over us in getting up Skiddaw—I hope to be more lucky in Ben Lomond—and more lucky still in Ben Nevis. . . .

Tell my friends I do all I can for them, that is, drink their health in Toddy. Perhaps I may have some lines, by-and-by, to send you fresh, on your own letter.

Your affectionate friend,

JOHN KEATS.

THOMAS HOOD (1798-1845)

THOMAS HOOD was a writer both of humorous and of serious poetry. His humorous poems abound in puns, a form of wit which is rather looked down upon nowadays. His finest poems are the serious ones including "The Song of the Shirt" and "The Bridge of Sighs."

The others were written chiefly because they paid best. He himself said he had to be a lively Hood to make a livelihood.

I

This letter shows him as a fine writer of letters to children. It is written to a little girl, the child of his friend Dr. Elliot. The first sentence refers to an accidental tumble and roll at a picnic, ending in a furze bush.

17 ELM TREE ROAD, ST. JOHN'S WOOD,

Monday, April, 1844.

MY DEAR MAY,

I promised you a letter and here it is. I was sure to remember it; for you are as hard to forget as you are soft to roll down a hill with. What fun it was! only so prickly. I thought I had a porcupine in the one pocket and a hedgehog in the other. The next time, before we kiss the earth, we will have its face well shaved. Did you ever go to Greenwich Fair? I should like to go there with you, for I get no rolling at St. John's Wood. Tom and Fanny only like roll and butter, and as for Mrs. Hood she is rolling in money.

Tell Dunnie that Tom has set his trap in the balcony, and has caught a cold: and tell Jeanie that Fanny has set her foot in the garden, but it has not come up yet. Oh, how I wish it was the season when "March winds and April showers bring forth May flowers!" for then of course you would give me another pretty little nosegay. Besides, it is frosty and foggy weather, which I do not like. The other night, when I came from Stratford, the cold shrivelled me up so, that when I got home I thought I was my own child.

However, I hope we shall all have a merry Christmas. I mean to come in my most ticklesome waistcoat, and to laugh till I grow fat, or at least streaky. Fanny is to be allowed a glass of wine; Tom's mouth

is to have a hole holiday, and Mrs. Hood is to sit up to supper! There will be doings! And then such good things to eat; but, pray, pray, pray, mind they don't boil the baby by mistake for a plump pudding instead of a plum one.

Give my love to everybody, from yourself down to Willy, with which and a kiss, I remain, up hill and down dale, your affectionate lover,

THOMAS HOOD.

II

A characteristic and amusing letter from Hood to another of Dr. Elliot's children. The writer at this time was seriously ill.

DEVONSHIRE LODGE, NEW FINCHLEY ROAD,
ST. JOHN'S WOOD.

July 1st (1st of Hebrew falsity).

MY DEAR DUNNIE,

I have heard of your doings at Sandgate, and that you were so happy at getting to the sea, that you were obliged to be flogged a little to moderate it, and keep some for next day. I am very fond of the sea, too, though I have been twice nearly drowned by it: once in a storm in a ship and once under a boat's bottom when I was bathing. Of course you have bathed, but have you learned to swim yet? It is rather easy in salt water, and diving is still easier,

even, than at the sink. I only swim in fancy, and strike out new ideas!

Is not the tide curious? Though I cannot say much for its tidiness; it makes such a slop and litter on the beach. It comes and goes as regularly as the boys of a proprietary school, but has no holidays. And what a rattle the waves make with the stones when they are rough; you will find some rolled into decent marbles and bounces: and sometimes you may hear the sound of a heavy sea, at a distance, like a giant snoring. Some people say that every ninth wave is bigger than the rest. I have often counted, but never found it come true, except with tailors, of whom every ninth is a man. But in rough weather there are giant waves, bigger than the rest, that come in trios, from which, I suppose, Britannia rules the waves by the rule of three. When I was a boy, I loved to play with the sea, in spite of its sometimes getting rather rough. I and my brother chucked hundreds of stones into it, as you do; but we came away before we could fill it up. In those days we were at war with France. Unluckily, it's peace now, or with so many stones you might have good fun for days in pelting the enemy's coast. Once I almost thought I nearly hit Boney! Then there was looking for an island like Robinson Crusoe! Have you ever found one yet, surrounded by water? I remember once staying on the beach, when the tide was flowing, till I was a peninsula, and only by running turned myself into a continent.

Then there's fishing at the seaside. I used to catch flat fish with a very long string line. It was like swimming a kite! But perhaps there are no flat fish at Sandgate—except your shoe-soles. The best plan, if you want flat fish where there are none, is to bring codlings and hammer them into dabs. Once I caught a plaice, and, seeing it all over red spots, thought I had caught the measles.

Do you ever long, when you are looking at the sea, for a voyage? If I were off Sandgate with my yacht (only she is not yet built), I would give you a cruise in her. In the meantime you can practise sailing any little boat you can get. But mind that it does not flounder or get squamped, as some people say, instead of "founder" and "swamp." I have been swamped myself by malaria, and almost foundered, which reminds me that Tom, junior, being very ingenious, has made a cork model of a diving-bell that won't sink!

By this time, I suppose, you are become, instead of a land-boy, a regular sea-urchin; and so amphibious, that you can walk on the land as well as on the water—or better. And don't you mean, when you grow up, to go to sea? Should you not like to be a little midshipman? or half a quarter-master, with a cocked hat, and a dirk, that will be a sword by the time you are a man? If you do resolve to be a post-captain, let me know; and I will endeavour through my interest with the Commissioners of Pavements, to get you a post to jump over of the proper

height. Tom is just rigging a boat, so I suppose that he inclines to be an Admiral of the Marines. But before you decide, remember the port-holes, and that there are great guns in those battle-doors that will blow you into shuttlecocks, which is a worse game than whoop and hide—as to a good hiding!

And so farewell, young “Old Fellow,” and take care of yourself so near the sea, for in some places, they say, it has not even a bottom to go to if you fall in. And remember when you are bathing, if you meet with a shark, the best way is to bite off his legs, if you can, before he walks off with yours,—and so, hoping you will be better soon, for somebody told me you had had the shingles,

I am, my Dear Dunnie,

Your affectionate friend,

THOMAS HOOD.

P.S.—I have heard that at Sandgate there used to be lobsters; but some ignorant fairy turned them all by a spell into bolsters.

III

To give a proper picture of Hood would require more letters than we have room to insert.

Behind the comic there was always the tragic—the ceaseless struggle to make ends meet, the long-continued and losing fight against disease.

His closing years were comforted by the grant of a

pension from the Government. Sir Robert Peel had this transferred from Hood's name to that of his wife.

To Sir Robert Peel.

His last letter and his last pun.

DEVONSHIRE LODGE, NEW FINCHLEY ROAD,

1845.

DEAR SIR,

We are not to meet in the flesh. Given over by my physicians and by myself, I am only kept alive by frequent instalments of mulled port wine. In this extremity I feel a comfort, for which I cannot refrain from again thanking you, with all the sincerity of a dying man,—and, at the same time, bidding you a respectful farewell.

Thank God my mind is composed and my reason undisturbed, but my race as an author is run. My physical debility finds no tonic virtue in a steel pen, otherwise I would have written one more paper—a forewarning one—against an evil, or the danger of it, arising from a literary movement in which I have had some share, a one-sided humanity, opposite to that Catholic Shakespearean sympathy, which felt with King as well as Peasant, and duly estimated the mortal temptations of both stations. Certain classes at the poles of Society are already too far asunder; it should be the duty of our writers to

draw them nearer by kindly attraction, not to aggravate the existing repulsion, and place a wider moral gulf between Rich and Poor, with Hate on the one side and Fear on the other. But I am too weak for this task, the last I had set myself; it is death that stops my pen, you see, and not the pension.

God bless you, Sir, and prosper all your measures for the benefit of my beloved country.

LORD MACAULAY (1800-59)

It is a valuable thing to have a description of a historic scene from one who has had a share in the events described. When the eye-witness is a master of descriptive writing the value is doubled.

In this letter, Macaulay who was famous alike as poet, historian, essayist and statesman, describes the scene in the House of Commons when the second reading of the first Reform Bill was carried by a majority of one. It is written to his life-long friend, Mr. Thomas Flower Ellis, a brother barrister.

LONDON, *March* 30, 1831.

DEAR ELLIS,

I have little news for you, except what you will learn from the papers as well as from me. It is clear that the Reform Bill must pass, either in

this or in another Parliament. The majority of one does not appear to me, as it does to you, by any means inauspicious. We should perhaps have had a better plea for a dissolution if the majority had been the other way. But surely a dissolution under such circumstances would have been a most alarming thing. If there should be a dissolution now, there will not be that ferocity in the public mind which there would have been if the House of Commons had refused to entertain the Bill at all. I confess that, till we had a majority, I was half inclined to tremble at the storm which we had raised. At present I think that we are absolutely certain of victory, and of victory without commotion.

Such a scene as the division of last Tuesday I never saw, and never expect to see again. If I should live fifty years, the impression of it will be as fresh and sharp in my mind as if it had just taken place. It was like seeing Cæsar stabbed in the Senate House, or seeing Oliver taking the mace from the table; a sight to be seen only once, and never to be forgotten. The crowd overflowed the House in every part. When the strangers were cleared out, and the doors locked, we had six hundred and eight members present,—more by fifty-five than ever were in a division before. The Ayes and Noes were like two volleys of cannon from opposite sides of a field of battle. When the opposition went out into the lobby, an operation which took up twenty minutes or more, we spread ourselves over the benches on both sides

of the House: for there were many of us who had not been able to find a seat during the evening.* When the doors were shut we began to speculate on our numbers. Everybody was desponding. "We have lost it. We are only two hundred and eighty at most. They are three hundred. Alderman Thompson has counted them. He says they are two hundred and ninety-nine." This was the talk on our benches. I wonder that men who have been long in Parliament do not acquire a better coup d'œil for numbers. The House, when only the Ayes were in it, looked to me a very fair house,—much fuller than it generally is even on debates of considerable interest. I had no hope, however, of three hundred. As the tellers passed along our lowest row on the left-hand side the interest was insupportable,—two hundred and ninety-one,—two hundred and ninety-two,—we were all standing up and stretching forward telling with the tellers. At three hundred there was a short cry of joy,—at three hundred and two another, suppressed however in a moment; for we did not yet know what the hostile force might be. We knew, however, that we could not be severely beaten. The doors were thrown open, and in they came. Each of them, as he entered, brought some different report of their numbers. It must have been impossible, as you may conceive, in the lobby, crowded

*"The practice in the Commons, until 1836, was to send one party forth into the lobby, the other remaining in the House."—Sir T. Erskine May's *Parliamentary Practice*.

as they were, to form any exact estimate. First we heard that they were three hundred and three; then that number rose to three hundred and ten; then went down to three hundred and seven. Alexander Baring told me that he had counted, and that they were three hundred and four. We were all breathless with anxiety, when Charles Wood, who stood near the door, jumped up on a bench and cried out "They are only three hundred and one." We set up a shout that you might have heard to Charing Cross, waving our hats, stamping against the floor, and clapping our hands. The tellers scarcely got through the crowd: for the House was thronged up to the table, and all the floor was fluctuating with heads like the pit of a theatre. But you might have heard a pin drop as Duncanson read the numbers. Then again the shouts broke out, and many of us shed tears. I could scarcely refrain. And the jaw of Peel fell; and the face of Twiss was as the face of a damned soul; and Herries looked like Judas taking his necktie off for the last operation. We shook hands, and clapped each other on the back, and went out laughing, crying and huzzaing into the lobby. And no sooner were the outer doors opened than another shout answered that within the House. All the passages, and the stairs into the waiting-rooms, were thronged by people who had waited till four in the morning to know the issue. We passed through a narrow lane between two thick masses of them; and all the way down they were shouting and

waving their hats, till we got into the open air. I called a cabriolet, and the first thing the driver asked was, "Is the Bill carried?" "Yes, by one." "Thank God for it, Sir." And away I rode to Gray's Inn—and so ended a scene which will probably never be equalled till the reformed Parliament wants reforming; and that I hope will not be till the days of our grandchildren, till that truly orthodox and apostolical person Dr. Francis Ellis is an archbishop of eighty.

As for me, I am for the present a sort of lion. My speech has set me in the front rank, if I can keep there; and it has not been my luck hitherto to lose ground when I have once got it. Sheil and I are on very civil terms. He talks largely concerning Demosthenes and Burke. He made, I must say, an excellent speech; too florid and queer, but decidedly successful.

Why did not Price speak? If he was afraid, it was not without reason: for a more terrible audience there is not in the world. I wish that Praed had known to whom he was speaking. But, with all his talent, he has no tact, and he has fared accordingly. Tierney used to say that he never rose in the House without feeling his knees tremble under him: and I am sure that no man who has not some of that feeling will ever succeed there.

Ever yours,

T. B. MACAULAY.

THOMAS CARLYLE (1795-1881)

MUCH has been written of the life and works of Carlyle, the essayist and historian. His greatest work was *The French Revolution*; but the best picture of the man himself is found in his letters. The letter given was written to his sister Mrs. Aitken, and is interesting for the description it gives of a Scotsman's impression of London.

5 CHEYNE ROW, CHELSEA, LONDON,

July 6, 1834.

MY DEAR JEAN,

Your Letter, which was the first I had received from any of my Friends in Scotland, proved one of the welcomest I ever got. The Postman's two knocks (for all Postmen give two smart thumps which are known here and elsewhere as the "Postman's knock") brought me it and the newspaper, and delivered me from a multitude of vague imaginations. Newspapers indeed had come the week before, and persuaded me that nothing material was wrong; however, it was still the best that could happen to have it all confirmed in black-on-white. Tell James that in spite of his critical penetration, the Letter "*could go*," and did go, and was welcomed as few are.

Whatever you may think, it is not a "Ten minutes" matter with me, the filling of a frank that

will carry an ounce of thin writing paper; it is a decided *business*, which breaks the head of a day for me: which breakage, however, I am generally well disposed to execute.

Do you also take a large, even a *long*, shaped sheet, a clear pointed pen, and in the smallest hand you can master; repay it me. By no means must I want Dumfriesshire news, especially news about my Mother. The tax-loaded Post Office is still the most invaluable of Establishments; and the ancient men, that invented *writing*, and made the voice of man triumphant over Space and Time, were deservedly accounted next to gods. I would have you, in particular, do your endeavour by assiduous practice (there is no other method) to perfect yourself in that divine art, the uses of which no man can calculate; in time, as I predict, you will acquire very considerable excellence. . . .

As you have doubtless seen or will see the copious despatches I have sent to Annandale about our Household Establishment, wherein nothing from the very watering-pan and marigold flowers upwards is forgotten, I need not dilate farther on that topic. We have at length all but got the last struggles of the upholsterer squadron handsomely conducted out of doors, with far less damage than might have been apprehended; and sit quietly in a Dwelling-place really much beyond what could have been anticipated; where, if Providence but grant us grace not to be wanting to *ourselves*, the rest may pass quite

uncriticised. We have not yet ceased to admire the union of quietness and freshness of air, and the outlook into green trees (Plum trees, walnuts, even mulberries, they say), with the close neighbourhood of the noisiest Babylon that ever raged and *fumed* (with coal smoke) on the face of this Planet. I can alternate between the one and the other in half an hour! The London streets themselves are quite a peculiar object, and I daresay of almost *inexhaustible* significance. There is such a torrent of vehicles and faces; the slow-rolling, all-defying waggon, like a mountain in motion, the dejected Hackney-Coach, that "has seen better days," but goes along as with a tough uncomplaining patience, the gay equipage with its light bounding air, and *flunkies* of colour hanging behind it; the *distracted* cab (a thing like a cradle set aslant on its foot-end, where you sit open in front but free from rain), which always some *blackguard* drives with the fury of Jehu; the huge omnibus (a pointed *Corn-kist*, of twenty feet long, set on four wheels: no, it cannot be *twenty* feet!) which runs along all streets from all points of the compass, as a sixpenny or shilling stage-coach, towards "The Bank" (of England); Butchers' and Brewers' and Bakers' Drays; all these, with wheelbarrows, trucks (hurlies), dogcarts, and a nameless flood of other *sma' trash*, hold on unweariedly their ever-vexed chaotic way. And then of foot-passengers! From the King to the Beggar; all in haste, all with a look of care and endeavour; and

as if there *were* really "Deevil a thing but one man oppressing another." To wander along and read all this: it is reading one of the strangest everlasting *Newspaper Columns* the eye ever opened on; a Newspaper Column of *living* Letters (as I often say), that was printed in ETERNITY, and is here published only for a little while in TIME, and will soon be recalled—taken out of circulation again.

For the rest, we live exceedingly happy here; as yet visited by few, and happily by almost *none* that is not worth being visited by. At any time, in half an hour, I can have company enough of the sort going; and scarcely above once or twice in the week is my Day taken from me by any intrusion. I am getting rather stiffly to work again; and once well at work, can defy the whole Powers of Darkness, and say in my heart (as Tom Ker the mason did to Denbie and "the Marquis" or some Military minion of his): "Ye will go your length, gentlemen; my name's Tom Ker." By and by, if all go right, you shall see some book of mine with my name (not of "Tom Ker") on it, and the best I can do. Pray that it be honestly done, let its reception be what it will.

Of "amusements" beyond mere strolling, I take little thought. By acquaintance with newspaper people (such as Hunt) I fancy we might procure free admission to the Theatres, even to the Opera, almost every night; but, alas! what would it avail? I actually went, one idle night before Jane came, to

Covent Garden; found it a very mystery of stupidity and abomination; and so tiresome that I came away long before the end, and declare that the dullest sermon I ever heard was cheery in comparison.

The night before last, looking out from our (back) bedroom window at midnight, I saw the many-coloured rockets rising from Vauxhall Gardens, and thought with myself: "Very well, gentlemen, if you have 'guinea admission' to spare for it; only, thank Heaven, I am not within a measured mile of you!" There are a few good, even noble people here too; there must be a few; if there were not, the whole concern would take fire: of these I even know some, and hope to know more.

But now, my dear Sister, you have enough of London; let me turn a little northward. I am much obliged by your description of Mother's settlement; I can form a very tolerable notion of her arrangement in the two well-known rooms, and find the most natural that could be made. I hope, however, the *Clock* is now got safely hoisted up: surely, among so many stout hands, any task of that kind could not be difficult. However, where a Honeymoon is in progress one must *thole*, one must *thole*. I also like very well to hear of your Jamie's boarding with our Mother, while he is at his work in the neighbourhood. I follow him across the fresh fields, daily in the morning, to the Ha, and heartily wish him a *useful* day. There is no other way of making a *pleasant* day; that I could ever hear of. That he finds employ-

ment in his honest vocation is a great blessing, for which I trust you are thankful.

Tell him to *follow* his vocation honestly, not as a man-pleaser, or one working for the eye of man only, but as one forever under *another* Eye that never slumbers or sleeps, that *sees* in secret and will reward openly. I hope and believe that this is his course, that he will persevere in it, let the wind of accident blow fair or foul; and so I can prophesy all manner of good for him.

. . . There is much louder thunder to-day, and a copious deluge of rain; of all which we hope to reap the benefit to-morrow, for the air was growing foully uncomfortable, and oppressive too; a sour east wind, amid the sultriest brick kiln heat, with dusts enough and vapours as we have them in these streets and ways. A day's rain washes everything above ground and beneath it. Next morning we can "sniff the *caller* air" for it is there to snuff. . . . This is a far larger Letter than yours, Dame; and deserves two in return for it; think of that, and of what you are to *do* in consequence. . . . That Scotsbrig residence, I think with you and have always thought, can hardly be permanently comfortable for our Mother; if it serve well for one year, that is all I hope of it: then other outlooks may have opened. In the meanwhile, Toleration, "the Act of Mutual Toleration!" One can live without it *nowhere* on this earth's surface. Remember me kindly to dear little Prudence. Tell her to mind her seam, and be

considerate and wise, and grow daily wiser; and then it will go better and better with her.—Jane, whose health seems better than of old and still improving, sends her love to all of you. . . . And so farewell, my dear Sister. Be true and loving!

Ever your affectionate

T. CARLYLE.

JANE WELSH CARLYLE (1801-66)

IN the art of letter-writing Mrs. Carlyle was in no way inferior to her famous husband. Indeed in their naturalness and variety her letters surpass his.

Here is an example showing how she could make a lively, enjoyable letter whatever the subject might be.

CHELSEA, *March*, 1843.

MY DEAREST HELEN,

After (in *Dumfries and Galloway-Courier* phraseology) "taking a bird's-eye view" of all modern literature, I am arrived at the conclusion, that, to find a book exactly suited to my uncle's taste, I must write it myself! and, alas, that cannot be done before to-morrow morning!

La Motte Fouqué's "*Magic Ring*" suggests Geraldine (Jewsbury). "Too mystical! My uncle

detests confusion of ideas." "Paul de Kock? *he* is very witty." "Yes, but also very indecent; and my uncle would not relish indecencies read aloud to him by his daughters." "Oh! ah! well! Miss Austen?" "Too washy; water-gruel for mind and body at the same time were too bad." Timidly, and after a pause, "Do you think he could stand Victor Hugo's *Notre Dame*? The idea of my uncle listening to the sentimental monstrosities of Victor Hugo! A smile of scorn was this time all my reply. But in my own suggestions I have been hardly more fortunate. All the books that pretend to amuse in our day come, in fact, either under that category, which you except against, "the extravagant, clown-jesting sort," or still worse, under that of what I should call the galvanised—death's head—grinning sort. There seems to be no longer any genuine heart-felt mirth in writers of books; they sing and dance still *vigoureusement*, but one sees always too plainly that it is not voluntarily, but only for halfpence; and for halfpence they will crack their windpipes, and cut capers on the crown of their heads, poor men that they are!

I bethink me of one book, however, which we have lately read here, bearing a rather questionable name as a book for my uncle, but, nevertheless, I think he would like it. It is called *Passages from the Life of a Radical*, by Samuel Bamford, a silk-weaver of Middleton. He was one of those who got into trouble during the Peterloo time; and the

details of what he then saw and suffered are given with a simplicity, an intelligence, and absence of everything like party violence, which it does one good to fall in with, especially in these inflated times.

There is another book that might be tried, though I am not sure that it has not a little too much affinity with water-gruel, *The Neighbours*, a domestic novel translated from the Swedish by Mary Howitt. There is a "Little Wife" in it, with a husband, whom she calls "Bear," that one never wearies of, although they never say or do anything in the least degree extraordinary.

Geraldine strongly recommends Stephen's *Incidents of Travel in Egypt, Arabia and Petrea*, as "very interesting and very short." Also Waterton's *Wanderings in South America*. There are two novels of Paul de Kock translated into English, which might be tried at least without harm done, for they are unexceptionable in the usual sense of that term, the *Barber of Paris*, and *Sister Anne*.

I have read the last, not the first, and I dare say it would be very amusing for anyone who likes *Gil Blas* and that sort of books; for *my* taste it does not get on fast enough.

There! enough of books for one day. Thank you for your letter, dear. If I had not wee angels to write me consolatory missives at present, I should really be terribly ill off. My maid continues highly inefficient, myself ditto. The weather complicates everything: for days together not a soul comes; and

then if the sun glimmers forth a whole rush of people breaks in, to the very taking away of one's breath!

Yesterday, between the hours of three and five, we had old Sterling, Mr. and Mrs. Von Glöhen, Mr. and Mrs. Macready, John Carlyle, and William Cunningham. Geraldine professed to be mightily taken with Mrs. Macready: not so much so with "William." Poor dear William! I never thought him more interesting, however. To see a man who is exhibiting himself every night on a stage, blushing like a young girl in a private room, is a beautiful phenomenon for me. His wife whispered into my ear, as we sat on the sofa together, "Do you know poor William is in a perfect agony to-day at having been brought here in that great-coat? It is a stage great-coat, but was only worn by him twice; the piece it was made for did not succeed, but it was such an expensive coat, I would not let him give it away; and doesn't he look well in it?" I wish Jeannie had seen him in the coat—magnificent fur neck and sleeves, and such frogs on the front. He did look well, but so heartily ashamed of himself.

Oh, I must tell you, for my uncle's benefit, a domestic catastrophe that occurred last week! One day, after dinner, I heard Helen lighting the fire, which had gone out, in the room above, with a perfectly unexampled vengeance; every stroke of the poker seemed an individual effort of concentrated rage. What ails the creature now? I said to myself. Who has incurred her sudden

displeasure? or is it the red herring she had for dinner which has disagreed with her stomach? (for in the morning, you must know, when I was ordering the dinner, she had asked, might *she* have a red herring? "her heart had been set upon it this good while back"; and, of course, so modest a petition received an unhesitating affirmative). On her return to the subterranean, the same hubbub wild arose from below, which had just been trying my nerves from above; and when she brought up the tea-tray, she clanked it on the lobby-table, as if she were minded to demolish the whole concern at one fell stroke. I looked into her face inquiringly as she entered the room, and seeing it black as midnight (*morally*, that is), I said very coolly "A little less noise, if you please; you are getting rather loud upon us." She cast up her eyes with the look of a martyr at the stake, as much as to say, "Well, if I must be quiet, I must: but you little know my wrongs." By-and-by Geraldine went to the kitchen for some reason; she is oftener in the kitchen in one day than I am in a month, but that is irrelevant. "Where is the cat?" said she to Helen; I have not seen her all night." She takes a wonderful, most superfluous charge of the cat, as of everything else in this establishment. "The cat!" said Helen grimly, "I have all but killed her." "How?" said Geraldine. "With the besom," replied the other. "Why? for goodness' sake." "Why indeed? Because she ate my red herring! I set it all ready on

the end of the dresser, and she ran away with it, and ate it every morsel to the tail—such an unheard-of thing for the brute to do. Oh, if I could have got hold of her, she should not have got off with her life!” “And have you had no dinner?” asked Geraldine. “Oh, yes, I had mutton enough, but I had just set my heart on a red herring.” Which was the most deserving of having a besom taken to her, the cat or the woman?

My love to Babbie; her letter to-day is most comfortable. Blessings on you all,—

Your affectionate cousin,

J. WELSH.

EDWARD FITZGERALD (1809–83)

EDWARD FITZGERALD will always be remembered for his poem *The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*, supposed to be a translation from the work of a Persian poet.

He was also a born letter-writer and took great delight in corresponding with his many friends.

This charming little letter gives a fine picture of rural pleasures.

GELDESTONE HALL, BECCLES,

April 28, 1839.

MY DEAR ALLEN,

Some one from this house is going to London: and I will try and write you some lines now in half

an hour before dinner: I am going out for the evening to my old lady who teaches me the names of the stars and other chaste information. You see, Master John Allen, that if I do not come to London (and I have no thought of going yet) and you will not write, there is likely to be an end of our communication: not by the way that I am never to go to London again: but not just yet. Here I live with tolerable content: perhaps with as much as most people arrive at, and what if one were properly grateful one would perhaps call perfect happiness. Here is a glorious sunshiny day: all the morning I read about Nero in Tacitus lying at full length on a bench in the garden; a nightingale singing and some red anemones eyeing the sun manfully not far off.

A funny mixture all this: Nero, and the delicacy of Spring: all very human, however. Then at half-past one lunch on Cambridge cream cheese: then a ride over hill and dale: then spudding up some weeds from the grass: and then coming in, I sit down to write to you, my sister winding red worsted from the back of a chair, and the most delightful little girl in the world chattering incessantly. So runs the world away. You think I live in Epicurean ease: but this happens to be a jolly day: one isn't always well, or tolerably good, the weather is not always clear, nor nightingales singing, nor Tacitus full of pleasant atrocity. But such as life is, I believe I have got hold of a good end of it. . . .

Give my love to Thackeray from your upper window across the street.

So he has lost a little child: and moreover has been sorry to do so.

Well, goodbye, my dear John Allen: Auld Lang Syne. My kind regards to your Lady.

Down to the vale this water steers,
How merrily it goes!
'Twill murmur on a thousand years,
And flow as now it flows.

E. F. G.

WILLIAM MAKEPEACE THACKERAY
(1811-63)

It is unfortunate that many of Thackeray's letters have never been published; for those that have appeared, show the great novelist as a man of the most genial and lovable character.

The letter given was written to the Hon. H. B. Reed, whose acquaintance Thackeray made when lecturing in America.

NEUFCHATEL, SWITZERLAND,

July 21, 1853.

MY DEAR REED,

Though I am rather slow in paying the tailor I always pay him; and as with tailors, so with men;

I pay my debts to my friends, only at rather a long day. Thank you for writing to me so kindly, you who have so much to do. I have only begun to work ten days since, and now, in consequence, have little leisure. Before, since my return from the West, it was flying from London to Paris, and vice versa—dinners right and left—parties every night. If I had been in Philadelphia, I could scarcely have been more feasted. Oh, you unhappy Reed! I see you (after that little supper with M^r Michael) on Sunday, at your own table, when we had that good sherry-madeira, turning aside from the wine cup with your pale face! That cup has gone down this well so often, that I wonder the cup isn't broken, and the well as well as it is. Three weeks of London were more than enough for me, and I feel as if I had had enough of it and of pleasure. Then I remained a month with my parents: then I brought my girls on a little pleasuring tour. We spent ten days at Baden, when I set intrepidly to work again; and have been five days in Switzerland now, not bent on going up mountains, but on taking things easily. How beautiful it is! How pleasant! How great and affable, too, the landscape is! It's delightful to be in the midst of such scenes—the ideas get generous reflections from them. I don't mean to say my thoughts grow mountainous and enormous like the Alpine chain yonder—but, in fine, it is good to be in the presence of this noble nature. It is keeping good company; keeping away mean

thoughts. I see in the papers now and again accounts of fine parties in London. *Bon Dieu!* Is it possible any one ever wanted to go to fine London parties, and are there now people sweating in May-fair routs?

The European continent swarms with your people. They are not all as polished as Chesterfield. I wish some of them spoke French a little better. I saw five of them at supper, at Basle, the other night, with their knives down their throats. It was awful. My daughter saw it, and I was obliged to say: "My dear, your great-great-grandmother, one of the finest ladies of the old school I ever saw, always applied cold steel to her victuals. It's no crime to eat with a knife," which is all very well, but I wish five of 'em at a time wouldn't.

Will you please beg M'Michael, when Mrs. Glyn, the English tragic actress, comes to read Shakespeare in your city, to call on her—do the act of kindness to her, and help her with his valuable editorial aid? I wish we were going to have another night soon, and that I was going this very evening to set you up with a headache against to-morrow morning. By Jove, how kind you all were to me! How I like people, and want to see 'em again! You are more tender-hearted, romantic, sentimental, than we are. I keep on telling this to our fine people here, and have so belaboured your country with praise in private that I sometimes think I go too far. I keep back some of the truth; but the great point to try and ding into the ears of the great, stupid, virtue-

proud English is, that there are folks as good as they in America. That's where Mrs. Stowe's book has done harm, by inflaming us with an idea of our own superior virtue in freeing our blacks, whereas you keep yours. Comparisons are always odorous, as Mrs. Malaprop says.

I am about a new story, but don't know as yet if it will be any good. It seems to me I am too old for story-telling; but I want money, and shall get 20,000 dollars for this, of which (D.V.) I'll keep fifteen. I wish this rubbish (the sketch) were away;* I might put written rubbish in its stead. Not that I have anything to say, but that I always remember you and yours, and honest Mac, and Wharton, and Lewis, and kind fellows who have been kind to me, and I hope will be kind to me again.

Goodbye, my dear Reed, and believe me,

Ever sincerely yours,

W. M. THACKERAY.

The sketch. When writing the letter, Thackeray, on turning the paper found a pen-and-ink sketch. At the top he wrote "Pardon this rubbishing picture; but I didn't see and can't afford to write page 3 over again."

CHARLES DICKENS (1812-70)

THE letters of Charles Dickens, the novelist, form a most interesting supplement to his biography. They are just the kind of letters we should expect—frank, humorous and straightforward.

I

The letter given was written to the Hon. Mrs. Watson and gives a humorous account of London out of season.

BOULOGNE, *Wednesday, Sept. 21, 1853.*

MY DEAR MRS. WATSON,

The courier was unfortunately engaged. He offered to recommend another, but I had several applicants, and begged Mr. Wills to hold a grand review at the *Household Words* Office and select the man who is to bring me down as his victim. I am extremely sorry the man you recommend was not to be had. I should have been so delighted to take him.

I am finishing *The Child's History*, and clearing the way through *Household Words* in general, before I go on my trip. I forget whether I told you that Mr. Egg the painter and Mr. Collins are going with me. The other day I was in town. In case you should not have heard of the condition of that deserted village, I think it worth mentioning. All the streets

of any note were unpaved, mountains high, and all the omnibuses were sliding down alleys, and looking into the upper windows of small houses. At eleven o'clock one morning I was positively alone in Bond Street. I went to one of my tailors, and he was at Brighton. A smutty-faced woman among some gorgeous regimentals, half finished, had not the least idea when he would be back. I went to another of my tailors, and he was in an upper room, with open windows and surrounded by mignonette boxes, playing the piano in the bosom of his family. I went to my hosier's, and two of the least presentable of "the young men" of that elegant establishment were playing at draughts in the back shop. (Likewise I beheld a porter-pot hastily concealed under a Turkish dressing-gown of a golden pattern.) I then went wandering about to look for some ingenious portmanteau, and near the corner of St. James's Street saw a solitary being sitting in a trunk-shop, absorbed in a book, which, on a close inspection, I found to be *Bleak House*. I thought this looked well, and went in. And he really was more interested in seeing me, when he knew who I was, than any face I had seen in any house, every house I knew being occupied by painters, including my own. I went to the Athenæum that same night, to get my dinner, and it was shut up for repairs. I went home late, and had forgotten the key and was locked out.

Preparations were made here, about six weeks ago, to receive the Emperor, who is not come yet. Mean-

while our countrymen (deluded in the first excitement) go about staring at these arrangements, with a personal injury upon them which is most ridiculous. And they will persist in speaking an unknown tongue to the French people, who will speak English to them.

Kate and Georgina send their kindest loves. We are all quite well. Going to drop two small boys here, at school with a former Eton tutor highly recommended to me. Charley was heard of a day or two ago. He says his professor "is very short-sighted, always in green spectacles, always drinking weak beer, always smoking a pipe, and always at work." The last qualification seems to appear to Charley the most astonishing one.

Ever, my dear Mrs. Watson,
Most affectionately yours.

II

Another of the friendly, chatting letters of Dickens, describing a picnic at which he entertained his son and some of his Eton schoolfellows.

BROADSTAIRS, KENT, *July* 11, 1851.

MY DEAR MRS. WATSON,

I am so desperately indignant with you for writing me that short apology for a note, and pretending to suppose that under any circumstances I

could fail to read with interest anything you wrote to me, that I have more than half a mind to inflict a regular letter upon you. If I were not the gentlest of men I should do it! . . .

A week or so ago I took Charley and three of his schoolfellows down the river gipsying. I secured the services of Charley's godfather (an old friend of mine, and a noble fellow with boys), and went down to Slough, accompanied by two immense hampers from Fortnum and Mason, on (I believe) the wettest morning ever seen out of the tropics.

It cleared before we got to Slough: but the boys, who had got up at four (we being due at eleven), had horrible misgivings that we might not come, in consequence of which we saw them looking into the carriages before us, all face. They seemed to have no bodies whatever, but to be all face: their countenances lengthened to that surprising extent. When they saw us the faces shut up as if they were upon strong springs, and their waistcoats developed themselves in the usual places. When the first hamper came out of the luggage van, I was conscious of their dancing behind the guard: when the second came out with bottles in it, they all stood wildly on one leg. We then got a couple of flys to drive to the boat-house. I put them in the first, but they couldn't sit still a moment, and were perpetually flying up and down like the toy figures in the sham snuff-boxes. In this order we went on to "Tom Browne's the tailor's," where they all dressed in aquatic cos-

tume, and then to the boat-house, where they all cried in shrill chorus for "Mahogany"—a gentleman so called by reason of his sun-burnt complexion, a waterman by profession. (He was likewise called during the day "Hog" and "Hogany" and seemed to be unconscious of any proper name whatsoever.) We embarked, the sun shining now, in a galley with a striped awning, which I had ordered for the purpose, and all rowing hard, went down the river. We dined in a field: what I suffered for fear those boys should get drunk, the struggles I underwent in a contest of feeling between hospitality and prudence, must ever remain untold. I feel, even now, old with the anxiety of that tremendous hour. They were very good, however. The speech of one became thick, and his eyes too like lobsters' to be comfortable, but only temporarily. He recovered and I suppose outlived the salad he took. I have heard nothing to the contrary, and I imagine I should have been implicated on the inquest if there had been one. We had tea and rashers of bacon at a public-house, and came home, the last five or six miles in a prodigious thunder-storm. This was the great success of the day, which they certainly enjoyed more than anything else. The dinner had been great, and Mahogany had informed them, after a bottle of light champagne, that he never would come up the river "with ginger company" any more. But the getting so completely wet through was the culminating part of the entertainment. You never in your life saw such objects

as they were: and their perfect unconsciousness that it was at all advisable to go home and change, or that there was anything to prevent their standing at the station two mortal hours to see me off, was wonderful. As to getting them to their dames with any sort of sense that they were damp, I abandoned the idea. I thought it a success when they went down the street as civilly as if they were just up and newly dressed, though they really looked as if you could have rubbed them to rags with a touch, like saturated curl-paper. . . .

I find I am "used up" by the Exhibition. I don't say "there is nothing in it"—there's too much. I have only been twice: so many things bewildered me. I have a natural horror of sights, and the fusion of so many sights in one has not decreased it.

I am not sure that I have seen anything but the fountain and perhaps the Amazon. It is a dreadful thing to be obliged to be false, but when anyone says "Have you seen—?" I say "Yes," because if I don't, I know he'll explain it, and I can't bear that. — took all the school one day. The school was composed of a hundred "infants" who got among the horses' legs in crossing to the main entrance from the Kensington Gate, and came reeling out from between the wheels of coaches undisturbed in mind. They were clinging to horses, I am told, all over the park. When they were collected and added up by the frantic monitors, they were all right. They were

then regaled with cake, etc., and went tottering and staring all over the place: the greater part wetting their forefingers and drawing a wavy pattern on every accessible object. One infant strayed. He was not missed. Ninety and nine were taken home, supposed to be the whole collection, but this particular infant went to Hammersmith. He was found by the police at night, going round and round the turnpike, which he still supposed to be a part of the Exhibition. He had the same opinion of the police, also of Hammersmith workhouse, where he passed the night. When his mother came for him in the morning, he asked when it would be over? It was a great Exhibition, he said, but he thought it long.

As I begin to have a foreboding that you will think the same of this act of vengeance of mine, this present letter, I shall make an end of it with my heartiest and most loving remembrances to Watson. I would have liked him of all things to have been in the Eton expedition, tell him, and to have heard a song (bye-the-bye, I have forgotten that) sung in the thunder-storm, solos by Charley, chorus by the friends, describing the career of a booby who was plucked at College, every verse ending:

I don't care a fig what the people may think,
But what WILL the governor say;

which was shouted with a deferential jollity towards

myself, as a governor who had that day done a creditable action, and proved himself worthy of all confidence.

Ever, dear Mrs. Watson,
Most sincerely yours.

LEWIS CARROLL (1832-98)

THE Author of *Alice in Wonderland* hardly requires any introduction. It may, however, be interesting to learn that the writer so widely known as "Lewis Carroll" was the Rev. C. L. Dodgson, a distinguished mathematical lecturer at Christ Church, Oxford.

I

The love for children, which led Lewis Carroll to write *Alice*, made him also one of the best writers of letters to children. This charming letter to a little girl with whom he made friends during a holiday at Sandown is a good example of the delightful nonsense he used to write for their amusement.

MY DEAR GERTRUDE,

I never give birthday presents, but you see I do sometimes write a birthday letter: so, as I've just arrived here, I am writing this to wish you many and many happy returns of your birthday tomorrow. I will drink your health, if only I can

remember, and if you don't mind—but perhaps you object? You see, if I were to sit by you at breakfast, and to drink your tea, you wouldn't like that, would you? You would say "Boo! hoo! Here's Mr. Dodgson's drunk all my tea, and I haven't got any left!" So I am very much afraid, next time Sybil looks for you, she'll find you sitting by the sad sea-wave, and crying "Boo! hoo! Here's Mr. Dodgson has drunk my health, and I haven't got any left!" And how it will puzzle Dr. Maund, when he is sent for to see you! "My dear Madam, I'm very sorry to say your little girl has got no health at all! I never saw such a thing in my life!" "Oh, I can easily explain it!" your mother will say. "You see she would go and make friends with a strange gentleman, and yesterday he drank her health!" "Well, Mrs. Chataway," he will say, "the only way to cure her is to wait till his next birthday, and then for her to drink his health."

And then we shall have changed healths. I wonder how you'll like mine! Oh, Gertrude, I wish you wouldn't talk such nonsense! . . .

Your loving friend,
LEWIS CARROLL.

II

The wonderful variety of Lewis Carroll's letters to his child friends is shown in this further example. As a writer of letters to children he has never been surpassed.

CHRIST CHURCH, OXFORD, *Dec. 9, 1875.*

MY DEAR GERTRUDE,

This really will not do, you know, sending one more kiss every time by post: the parcel gets so heavy it is quite expensive. When the postman brought in the last letter, he looked quite grave. "Two pounds to pay, sir!" he said. "Extra weight, sir!" (I think he cheats a little, by the way. He often makes me pay two pounds, when I think it should be pence.) "Oh, if you please, Mr. Postman!" I said, going down gracefully on one knee (I wish you could see me going down gracefully on one knee to a postman—it's a very pretty sight), "do excuse me just this once! It's only from a little girl!"

"Only from a little girl!" he growled. "What are little girls made of?" "Sugar and spice," I began to say, "and all that's ni——" but he interrupted me. "No! I don't mean that. I mean, what's the good of little girls, when they send such heavy letters?" "Well, they're not much good, certainly," I said, rather sadly.

"Mind you don't get any more such letters," he said, "at least, not from that particular little girl. I know her well, and she's a regular bad one!" That's not true, is it? I don't believe he ever saw you, and you're not a bad one, are you? However, I promised him we would send each other very few more letters—"Only two thousand four hundred and seventy, or so," I said. "Oh!" he said, "a little

number like that doesn't signify. What I meant is, you mustn't send many."

So you see we must keep count now, and when we get to two thousand four hundred and seventy, we mustn't write any more, unless the postman gives us leave.

I sometimes wish I was back on the shore at Sandown; don't you?

Your loving friend,

LEWIS CARROLL.

Why is a pig that has lost its tail like a little girl on the sea-shore?

Because it says, "I should like another tale, please."

III

Here is another example of the quaint humour of Lewis Carroll.

CHRIST CHURCH, OXFORD, *March 8, 1880.*

MY DEAR ADA,

(Isn't that your short name? "Adelaide" is all very well, but you see when one is dreadfully busy one hasn't time to write such long words—particularly when it takes one half an hour to remember how to spell it—and even then one has to go and get a dictionary to see if one has spelt it right, and of course the dictionary is in another room, at the top of a high bookcase—where it has been for months and months, and has got all covered with dust—so one has to get a duster first of all,

and nearly choke oneself in dusting it—and when one has made out at last which is dictionary and which is dust, even then, there's a job of remembering which end of the alphabet "A" comes—for one feels pretty certain it isn't in the middle—then one has to go and wash one's hands before turning over the leaves—for they've got so thick with dust one hardly knows them by sight—and, as likely as not, the soap is lost, and the jug is empty, and there's no towel, and one has to spend hours and hours in finding things—and perhaps after all one has to go off to the shop to buy a new cake of soap—so, with all this bother, I hope you won't mind my writing it short and saying, "My Dear Ada.") You said in your last letter you would like a likeness of me: so here it is, and I hope you will like it—I won't forget to call the next time but one I'm in Wallington.

Your very affectionate friend,

LEWIS CARROLL.

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON (1850-94)

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON, novelist, essayist and poet, was born in Edinburgh where his father and grandfather were well-known engineers and lighthouse builders. His whole life, like Hood's, was a battle against illness. He could not live in this country, and finally settled at Vailima in Samoa.

Only in their books are most authors known to the public: not so R. L. S. The man himself is as interesting as his works. His letters are of entrancing interest. They show the writer in all his varied moods and circumstances, and strengthen the hold which Stevenson, more than any other modern author, had gained in the affections of his readers.

I

The first letter given here* is one of three written to children. He learned that his friend, Miss Adelaide Boodle, was occupied in teaching and entertaining a class of children in a Kilburn basement and tried to help her by writing an account of Samoa and Samoan life for the children.

VAILIMA PLANTATION, SAMOAN ISLANDS,
September 4th, 1892.

DEAR CHILDREN IN THE CELLAR,

I told you before something of the black boys who come here for work on the plantations, and some of whom run away and live a wild life in the forests of the islands. Now I want to tell you of one who lived in the house of the lean man. Like the rest of them here, he is a little fellow, and when he goes about in old, battered, cheap European clothes, looks very small and shabby. When first he came he was as

The lean man. Stevenson himself.

*From "The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson," copyright 1895, 1899, 1907, 1911, by Charles Scribner's Sons.

lean as a tobacco-pipe, and his smile (like that of almost all the others) was the sort that makes you half wish to smile yourself, and half wish to cry. However, the boys in the kitchen took him in hand and fed him up. They would set him down alone to table and wait upon him till he had his fill, which was a good long time to wait; and the first thing we noticed was that his little stomach began to stick out like a pigeon's breast; and then the food got a little wider spread and he started little calves to his legs; and last of all he began to get quite saucy and impudent, so that we could know what sort of a fellow he really was when he was no longer afraid of being thrashed. He is really what you ought to call a young man, though I suppose nobody in the whole wide world has any idea of his age; and, as far as his behaviour goes, you can only think of him as a big little child with a good deal of sense. When Austin built his fort against the Indians, Arick (for that is the black boy's name) liked nothing so much as to help him. And this is very funny, when you think that of all the dangerous savages in this island Arick is one of the most dangerous. The other day, besides, he made Austin a musical instrument of the sort they use in his own country, a harp with only one string. He took a stick about three feet long, and perhaps four inches round. The under side he hollowed out in a deep trench to serve as sounding box; the two ends of the upper side he made to curve upward like the ends of a canoe, and between

these he stretched the single string. He plays upon it with a match or a little piece of stick, and sings to it songs of his own country, of which no person here can understand a single word, and which are very likely all about fighting with his enemies in battle, and killing them, and I am sorry to say, cooking them in a ground oven and eating them for supper when the fight is over.

For Arick is really what you might call a savage, though a savage is a very different person in reality, and a very much nicer, from what he is made to appear in little books. He is the sort of person that everybody smiles to, or makes faces at, or gives a smack to as he goes by; the sort of person that all the girls on the plantation give the best seat to, and help first, and love to decorate with flowers and ribbons, and yet all the while are laughing at him; the sort of person who likes best to play with Austin, and whom Austin perhaps (when he is allowed) likes best to play with. He is all grins and giggles, and little steps out of dances, and little droll ways, to attract people's attention and set them laughing. And yet when you come to look at him closer, you will find that his body is all covered with scars. This was when he was a child. There was a war, as is the way in these wild islands, between his village and the next, much as if there were war in London between one street and another; and all the children ran about playing in the middle of the trouble, and I dare say took no more notice of the

war than you children in London do of a general election. But sometimes, at general elections, English children may get run over by processions in the street; and it chanced that as little Arick was running about in the bush and very busy about his playing, he ran into the midst of the warriors on the other side. These speared him with a poisoned spear; and his own people when they had found him lying for dead, and in order to cure him of the poison, cut him up with knives that were probably made of fish-bones.

This is a very savage piece of child-life, and Arick, for all his good-nature, is still a very savage person. I have told you how the black boys sometimes run away from the plantations, and live behind alone in the forest, building little sheds to protect them from the rain, and sometimes planting little gardens of food, but for the most part living the best they can upon the nuts of the trees and yams that they dig with their hands out of the earth. I do not think there can be anywhere in the world people more wretched than these runaways. They cannot return, for they would only return to be punished. They can never hope to see again their own land or their own people—indeed, I do not know what they can hope, but just to find enough yams every day to keep them from starvation. And in the wet season of the year, which is our summer and your winter, and the rain falls day after day far harder and louder than the loudest thunder-plump that ever fell

in England, and the noon is sometimes so dark that the lean man is glad to light his lamp to write by, I can think of nothing so dreary as the state of these poor runaway slaves in the houseless bush. You are to remember, besides, that the people of this island hate and fear them because they are cannibals, sit and tell tales of them about their lamps at night in their own comfortable houses, and are sometimes afraid to lie down to sleep if they think there is a lurking black boy in the neighbourhood. Well now, Arick is of their own race and language, only he is a little more lucky because he has not run away; and how do you think he proposed to help them? He asked if he might not have a gun. "What do you want with a gun, Arick?" was asked. And he said quite simply, and with his nice good-natured smile, that if he had a gun he would go up into the high bush and shoot black boys as men shoot pigeons. He said nothing about eating them, nor do I think he really meant to. I think all he wanted was to clear the property of vermin as gamekeepers at home kill weasels, or housewives mice.

The other day he was sent down on an errand to the German Firm where many of the black boys live. It was very late when he came home on a bright moonlight night. He had a white bandage round his head, his eyes shone, and he could scarcely speak for excitement. It seems some of the black boys who were his enemies at home had attacked him, and one with a knife. By his own account he had fought

very well, but the odds were heavy; the man with the knife had cut him both in the head and back, he had been struck down, and if some of the black boys of his own side had not come to the rescue, he must certainly have been killed. I am sure no Christmas-box could make any of you children so happy as this fight made Arick. A great part of the next day he neglected his work to play upon the one-stringed harp and sing songs about his great victory. And to-day, when he is gone upon his holiday, he has announced that he is going back to the German Firm to have another battle and another triumph. I do not think he will go all the same, or I should be more uneasy, for I do not want to have my Arick killed; and there is no doubt that if he begins to fight again, he will be likely to go on with it very far. For I have seen him once when he saw, or thought he saw, an enemy. It was one of our dreadful days of rain, the sound of it like a great waterfall or like a tempest of wind blowing in the forest; and there came to our door two runaway black boys seeking work. In such weather as that my enemy's dog (as Shakespeare says) should have had a right to shelter. But when Arick saw these two poor rogues coming with their empty bellies and drenched clothes, and one of them with a stolen cutlass in his hand, through that world of falling water, he had no thought of pity in his heart. Crouching behind one of the pillars of the verandah, which he held in his two hands, his mouth

drew back into a strange sort of smile, his eyes grew bigger and bigger, and his whole face was just like the one word Murder in big capitals.

Now I have told you a great deal too much about poor Arick's savage nature, and now I must tell you about a great amusement he had the other day. There came an English ship of war in the harbour, and the officers very good-naturedly gave an entertainment of songs and dances and a magic-lantern, to which Arick and Austin were allowed to go. At the door of the hall there were crowds of black boys waiting and trying to peep in, the way children at home lie about and peep under the tent of a circus; and you may be sure Arick was a very proud person when he passed them all by and entered the hall with his ticket. I wish I knew what he thought of the whole performance; but the housekeeper of the lean man, who sat just in front of him, tells me what seemed to startle him the most. The first thing was when two of the officers came out with blackened faces like Christy minstrel boys and began to dance. Arick was sure that they were really black and his own people, and he was wonderfully surprised to see them dance this new European style of dance. But the great affair was the magic-lantern. The hall was made quite dark, which was very little to Arick's taste. He sat there behind the housekeeper, nothing to be seen of him but eyes and teeth, and his heart beating finely in his little scarred breast. And presently there came out on the white

sheet that great bright eye of light that I am sure all you children must have often seen. It was quite new to Arick, he had no idea what would happen next; and in his fear and excitement, he laid hold with his little slim black fingers like a bird's claws on the neck of the housekeeper in front of him. All through the rest of the show, as one picture followed another on the white sheet, he sat there gasping and clutching at the housekeeper's neck, and goodness knows whether he were more pleased or frightened. Doubtless it was a very fine thing to see all these bright pictures coming out and dying away again one after another; but doubtless it was rather alarming also, for how was it done? And at last, when there appeared upon the screen the head of a black woman (as it might be his own mother or sister), and the black woman of a sudden began to roll her eyes, the fear or the excitement, whichever it was, wrung out of him a loud, shuddering sob. And I think we all ought to admire his courage when, after an evening spent in looking on at such miracles, he and Austin set out alone through the forest to the lean man's house. It was late at night and pitch dark when some of the party overtook the little white boy and the big black boy marching among the trees with their lantern. I have told you the wood has an ill name, and all the people of the island believe it to be full of devils; but even if you do not believe in the devils, it is a pretty dreadful place to walk in by the moving light of a lantern,

with nothing about you but a curious whirl of shadows and the black night above and beyond. But Arick kept his courage up, and I dare say Austin's too, with a perpetual chatter, so that the people coming after heard his voice long before they saw the shining of the lantern.

My dear Miss Boodle,—will I be asking too much that you should send me back my letters to the Children, or copies, if you prefer; I have an idea that they may perhaps help in time to make up a book on the South Seas for children. I have addressed the Cellar so long this time that you must take this note for yourself and excuse,

Yours most sincerely,

R. L. STEVENSON.

II

The following letter* was written to George Meredith, the novelist. It is especially interesting for the account it gives of the difficulties under which Stevenson's work was carried on, and the insight it gives into his brave fighting spirit.

VAILIMA PLANTATION, UPOLU, SAMOA,

Sept. 5th, 1893.

MY DEAR MEREDITH,

I have again and again taken up the pen to write to you, and many beginnings have gone into the waste paper basket (I have one now—for the

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second time in my life—and feel a big man on the strength of it). And no doubt it requires some decision to break so long a silence. My health is vastly restored, and I am now living patriarchally in this place six hundred feet above the sea on the shoulder of a mountain of 1500. Behind me, the unbroken bush slopes up to the backbone of the island (3 to 4,000) without a house, with no inhabitants save a few runaway black boys, wild pigs and cattle, and wild doves and flying foxes, and many parti-coloured birds, and many black and many white: a very eerie, dim, strange place and hard to travel. I am the head of a household of five whites, and of twelve Samoans, to all of whom I am the chief and father: my cook comes to me and asks leave to marry—and his mother, a fine old chief woman, who has never lived here, does the same. You may be sure I granted the petition. It is a life of great interest, complicated by the Tower of Babel, that old enemy. And I have all the time on my hands for literary work.

My house is a great place; we have a hall fifty feet long with a great redwood stair ascending from it, where we dine in state—myself usually dressed in a singlet and a pair of trousers—and attended on by servants in a single garment, a kind of kilt—also flowers and leaves—and their hair often powdered with lime. The European who came upon it suddenly would think it was a dream. We have prayers on Sunday night—I am a perfect pariah in

the island not to have them oftener, but the spirit is unwilling and the flesh proud, and I cannot go it more. It is strange to see the long line of the brown folk crouched along the wall with lanterns at intervals before them in the big, shadowy hall, with an oak cabinet at one end of it and a group of Rodin's (which native taste regards as prodigieusement leste) presiding over all from the top—and to hear the long rambling Samoan hymn rolling up (God bless me, what style! But I am off business to-day, and this is not meant to be literature).

I have asked Colvin to send you a copy of *Catriona* which I am sometimes tempted to think is about my best work. I hear word occasionally of the *Amazing Marriage*. It will be a brave day for me when I get hold of it. Gower Woodseer is now an ancient, lean, grim, exiled Scot, living and labouring as for a wager in the tropics; still active, still with lots of fire in him, but the youth—ah, the youth where is it? For years after I came here, the critics (those genial gentlemen) used to deplore the relaxation of my fibre and the idleness to which I had succumbed. I hear less of this now; the next thing is they will tell me I am writing myself out! and that my unconscientious conduct is bringing their grey hairs with sorrow to the dust. I do not know—I mean I do know one thing. For fourteen years I have not

Gower Woodseer. The character of Gower Woodseer in Meredith's *Amazing Marriage* is supposed to have a certain likeness to that of R. L. S.

had a day's real health; I have wakened sick and gone to bed weary; and I have done my work unflinchingly. I have written in bed, and written out of it, written in hemorrhages, written in sickness, written torn by coughing, written when my head swam for weakness; and for so long, it seems to me I have won my wager and recovered my glove. I am better now, have been rightly speaking since first I came to the Pacific; and still, few are the days when I am not in some physical distress. And the battle goes on—ill or well, is a trifle; so as it goes. I was made for a contest, and the Powers have so willed that my battlefield should be this dingy, inglorious one of the bed and the physic bottle. At least I have not failed, but I would have preferred a place of trumpetings and the open air over my head.

This is a devilish egotistical yarn. Will you try to imitate me in that if the spirit ever moves you to reply? And meantime be sure that away in the midst of the Pacific there is a house on a wooded island where the name of George Meredith is very dear, and his memory (since it must be no more) is continually honoured.

Ever your friend,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

Remember me to Mariette, if you please; and my wife sends her most kind remembrances to yourself.

R. L. S.

EXERCISES AND QUESTIONS

1. Why is it that there are practically no English letters earlier than the fifteenth century?

2. Letter-writing is said to be a lost art nowadays. Discuss the influence in this connection of comparatively cheap postage, the electric telegraph, telephones and railways; also the effect of increasing the cost of letter postage.

3. In what would you say lies the fascination of London that it should attract writers so different as Walpole, Lamb and Dickens?

4. Could a man be happy without ever seeing a great city? Wherein consists the attractiveness of country life? See the letters of Dorothy Osborne, Cowper, Gray, Hunt, Fitzgerald.

5. Bacon says "Travel in the younger sort is a part of education; in the elder a part of experience." Illustrate this from the letters of Lady Montague, Shelley, Byron, Keats, Goldsmith.

6. "The style is the man." Discuss this in connection with Johnson's letter and Hood's. Could Johnson have written Hood's or *vice versa*? Describe the character of these authors as shown in the letters.

7. Comparatively few authors have been able to write good letters to children. From the letters to children given in this book what would you infer regarding the characters of the authors that made them successful in this kind of literary expression?

8. The greatest letter-writers are those who can reveal the charm of the commonplace. Discuss this.

Which of the letter-writers in this volume are distinguished from this point of view?

9. Compare Stevenson's letter to Meredith with one of his essays in respect of diction and sentence structure. What would you infer from this to be the happiest style for letter-writing?

10. Which would be the more pleasant to receive—a letter in the style of Addison or in that of Lamb? Why?

11. In what respects do letters after, say, 1700 reveal the wider interests of modern life?

12. Some letters in this volume were evidently carefully prepared, the subject of each paragraph being determined before the letter was commenced. Others are like conversations, expressing the thoughts of the moment as they arose. Give examples of each.

13. Lord Chesterfield describes to his son the receipt of a letter from a certain Mr. Samuel Johnson. Write this letter in the person of Lord Chesterfield.

14. Lord Chesterfield is a type of the worldly-wise man. Illustrate this from his letters. Contrast them with Letter No. I.

15. Sir John Chester in Dickens's *Barnaby Rudge* is supposed to be intended as a portrait of Lord Chesterfield. In what respects do you consider the likeness a good one?

16. Various aspects of friendship are brought out in these letters. Discuss them. See letters by Swift, Lord Chesterfield, Goldsmith.

17. There are different kinds of courage. Find examples in Stevenson's two letters and in Lady Mary

Montague's letter. Which do you consider the highest type of courage?

18. A long descriptive letter is rarely a success. Can you suggest why this should be so? Point out in what way Lady Mary Montague and Shelley overcome this difficulty.

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The letters of many literary men can be had in various cheap and good editions: Everyman's Library, World's Classics, Bohn's Popular Library, etc.



IN close connection with the intimate personal letter is the diary or journal which may be described as a letter to oneself. The diaries in English literature form a separate and very interesting branch of study, but we give below three extracts, one from each of the well-known diaries and journals of John Evelyn, Samuel Pepys and John Wesley. The style and manner of these three passages may very profitably be compared with those of the letters given in this book.

JOHN EVELYN (1620-1706). We read in the Introduction to the first edition of his Diary that "Mr. Evelyn lived in the busy and important times of King Charles I., Oliver Cromwell, King Charles II., King James II., and King William, and early accustomed himself to note such things as occurred, which he thought worthy of remembrance. He was known to, and had much personal intercourse with, the Kings Charles II. and James II.; and he was in habits of great intimacy with many of the ministers of these two monarchs, and with many of the eminent men of those days, as well amongst the clergy as the laity. Foreigners distinguished for learning, or arts, who came to England, did not leave it without visiting him."

Evelyn was keenly interested in horticulture and greatly improved the grounds of his father's estate of Wotton in Surrey, afterwards settling at Sayes Court, Deptford, where he brought the gardens to a state of high perfection. He was, moreover, the author of *Sylva*,

a delightful book for those interested in gardening and forestry. Evelyn travelled much not only on the Continent but also in his own country. The following are entries in his Diary.

15th January. There was a general fast through the whole nation, and now celebrated in London, to avert God's heavy judgments on this land. Great rain had fallen without any frost, or seasonable cold, not only in England, but in Sweden, and the most northern parts, being here near as warm as at Midsummer in some years.

This solemn fast was held for the House of Commons at St. Margaret's. Dr. Reeves, Dean of Windsor, preached on Joshua, vii. 12, showing how the neglect of exacting justice on offenders (by which he insinuated such of the old King's murderers as were yet reprieved and in the Tower) was a main cause of God's punishing a land. He brought in that of the Gibeonites, as well as Achan and others, concluding with an eulogy of the Parliament for their loyalty in restoring the Bishops and Clergy, and vindicating the Church from sacrilege.

16th. Having notice of the Duke of York's intention to visit my poor habitation and garden this day, I returned, when he was pleased to do me that honour of his own accord, and to stay some time viewing such things as I had to entertain his curiosity. Afterwards, he caused me to dine with him at the Treasurer of the Navy's house, and to sit with him covered at the same table. There were his Highness, the Duke of Ormond, and several Lords. Then they viewed some of my grounds about a project for a receptacle for ships to be moored in, which was laid aside as a fancy of Sir Nicholas Crisp. After this, I accompanied the Duke to

an East India vessel that lay at Blackwall, where we had entertainment of several curiosities. Amongst other spirituous drinks, as punch, &c., they gave us Canary that had been carried to and brought from the Indies, which was indeed incomparably good. I returned to London with his Highness. This night was acted before his Majesty *The Widow*, a lewd play.

18th. I came home to be private a little, not at all affecting the life and hurry of Court.

24th. His Majesty entertained me with his intentions of building his Palace of Greenwich, and quite demolishing the old one; on which I declared my thoughts.

25th. I dined with the Trinity-Company at their house, that Corporation being by charter fixed at Deptford.

3rd February. I went to Chelsea, to see Sir Arthur Gorges' house.

11th. I saw a comedy acted before the Duchess of York at the Cockpit. The King was not at it.

17th. I went with my Lord of Bristol to see his house at Wimbledon, newly bought of the Queen-Mother, to help contrive the garden after the modern. It is a delicious place for prospect and the thickets, but the soil cold and weeping clay. Returned that evening with Sir Henry Bennett.

This night was buried in Westminster-Abbey the Queen of Bohemia, after all her sorrows and afflictions being come to die in the arms of her nephew, the King: also this night and the next day fell such a storm of hail, thunder, and lightning, as never was seen the like in any man's memory, especially the tempest of wind, being south-west, which subverted, besides huge trees, many houses, innumerable chimneys (amongst others

that of my parlour at Sayes Court), and made such havoc at land and sea, that several perished on both. Divers lamentable fires were also kindled at this time; so exceedingly was God's hand against this ungrateful and vicious nation and Court.

20th. I returned home to repair my house, miserably shattered by the late tempest.

24th March. I returned home with my whole family, which had been most part of the winter, since October, at London, in lodgings near the Abbey of Westminster.

SAMUEL PEPYS (1633-1703). While a schoolboy at St. Paul's Pepys was an eyewitness of the execution of King Charles I., and in 1660 he accompanied his cousin who commanded the fleet which brought Charles II. back from exile. His Diary was begun on the first day of this year, concluding on the 31st of May, 1669. He became clerk to the Navy Board, and later Secretary to the Admiralty and M.P. for Harwich. Under James II. he was virtually minister for the navy. His Diary is interesting rather for its personal touches than its records of official life. The following entry gives an account of a visit to Epsom.

14th July. (Lord's day.) Up, and my wife, a little before four, and to make us ready; and by and by Mrs. Turner came to us, by agreement, and she and I staid talking below, while my wife dressed herself, which vexed me that she was so long about it, keeping us till past five o'clock before she was ready. She ready; and, taking some bottles of wine, and beer, and some cold fowle with us into the coach, we took coach and four horses, which I had provided last night, and so away. A very fine day, and so towards Epsom, talking

all the way pleasantly, and particularly of the pride and ignorance of Mrs. Lowther, in having of her train carried up. The country very fine, only the way very dusty. To Epsom, by eight o'clock, to the well; where much company, and I drank the water: they did not, but I did drink four pints. And to the towne, to the King's Head; and hear that my Lord Buckhurst and Nelly are lodged at the next house, and Sir Charles Sedley with them: and keep a merry house. Poor girl! I pity her; but more the loss of her at the King's house. W. Hewer rode with us, and I left him and the women, and myself walked to church, where few people to what I expected, and none I knew, but all the Houblons, brothers, and them after sermon I did salute, and walk with towards my inne. James did tell me that I was the only happy man of the Navy, of whom, he says, during all this freedom the people have taken to speaking treason, he hath not heard one bad word of me, which is a great joy to me; for I hear the same of others, but do know that I have deserved as well as most. We parted to meet anon, and I to my women into a better room, which the people of the house borrowed for us, and there to a good dinner, and were merry, and Pembleton come to us, who happened to be in the house, and there talked and were merry. After dinner, he gone, we all lay down, the day being wonderful hot, to sleep, and each of us took a good nap, and then rose; and here Tom Wilson come to see me, and sat and talked an hour; and I perceive he hath been much acquainted with Dr. Fuller (Tom) and Dr. Pierson, and several of the great cavalier parsons during the late troubles; and I was glad to hear him talk of them, which he did very ingenuously, and very much of Dr. Fuller's art of memory, which he did tell

me several instances of. By and by he parted, and we took coach and to take the ayre, there being a fine breeze abroad; and I carried them to the well, and there filled some bottles of water to carry home with me; and there I talked with the two women that farm the well, at £12 per annum, of the lord of the manor, Mr. Evelyn with his lady, and also my Lord George Barkeley's lady, and their fine daughter, that the King of France liked so well, and did dance so rich in jewels before the King at the ball I was at, at our Court, last winter, and also their son, a Knight of the Bath, were at church this morning. Here W. Hewer's horse broke loose, and we had the sport to see him taken again. Then I carried them to see my cozen Pepys's house, and 'light, and walked round about it, and they like it, as indeed it deserves, very well, and is a pretty place; and then I walked them to the wood hard by, and there got them in the thickets till they had lost themselves, and I could not find the way into any of the walks in the wood, which indeed are very pleasant, if I could have found them. At last got out of the wood again; and I, by leaping down the little bank, coming out of the wood, did sprain my right foot, which brought me great present pain, but presently, with walking, it went away for the present, and so the women and W. Hewer and I walked upon the Downes, where a flock of sheep was; and the most pleasant and innocent sight that ever I saw in my life. We found a shepherd and his little boy reading, far from any houses or sight of people, the Bible to him; so I made the boy read to me, which he did, with the forced tone that children do usually read, that was mighty pretty, and then I did give him something, and went to the father, and talked with him; and I find he had been a servant in

my cozen Pepys's house, and told me what was become of their old servants. He did content himself mightily in my liking of the boy's reading, and did bless God for him, the most like one of the old patriarchs that ever I saw in my life, and it brought those thoughts of the old age of the world in my mind for two or three days after. We took notice of his woollen knit stockings of two colours mixed, and of his shoes shod with iron, both at the toe and heels, and with great nails in the soles of his feet, which was mighty pretty: and, taking notice of them, why, says the poor man, the downes, you see, are full of stones, and we are faine to shoe ourselves thus; and these, says he, will make the stones fly till they ring before me. I did give the poor man something, for which he was mighty thankful, and I tried to cast stones with his horne crooke. He values his dog mightily, that would turn a sheep any way which he would have him, when he goes to fold them: told me there was about eighteen score sheep in his flock, and that he hath four shillings a week the year round for keeping of them: and Mrs. Turner, in the common fields here, did gather one of the prettiest nosegays that ever I saw in my life. So to our coach, and through Mr. Minnes's wood, and looked upon Mr. Evelyn's house; and so over the common, and through Epsom towne to our inne, in the way stopping a poor woman with her milk-pail, and in one of my gilt tumblers, did drink our bellyfulls of milk, better than any creame; and so to our inne, and there had a dish of creame, but it was sour, and so had no pleasure in it; and so paid our reckoning, and took coach, it being about seven at night, and passed and saw the people walking with their wives and children to take the ayre, and we set out for home, the sun by and by going down,

and we in the cool of the evening all the way with much pleasure home, talking and pleasing ourselves with the pleasures of this day's work. Mrs. Turner mightily pleased with my resolution, which, I tell her, is never to keep a country-house, but to keep a coach, and with my wife on the Saturday to go sometimes for a day to this place, and then quit to another place; and there is more variety and as little charge, and no trouble, as there is in a country-house. Anon it grew dark, and we had the pleasure to see several glow-wormes, which was mighty pretty, but my foot begins more and more to pain me, which Mrs. Turner, by keeping her warm hand upon it, did much ease; but so that when we come home, which was just at eleven at night, I was not able to walk from the lane's end to my house without being helped. So to bed, and there had a cere-cloth laid to my foot, but in great pain all night long.

JOHN WESLEY (1703-91). The great preacher and founder of Methodism began his first journal while at Oxford, where he made up his mind, he says, "to take a more exact account than I had done before of the manner wherein I spent my time, writing down how I had employed every hour." This plan was followed for no less than fifteen years, but in his thirty-second year, when he sailed for Georgia, his Journal becomes "a record of his travels, studies, and labours, of varied adventures, and intercourse with persons of all kinds: of his views on questions practical and speculative; and generally what had been mainly a religious timetable broadens into an autobiography." The following personal extract shows his demeanour in weariness and sickness and reveals the man. It also includes one of his letters, and the reader is asked to compare the style

and manner of this letter with the extracts from the Journal. He will find that the two are identical, which supports the idea that a true journal or diary is really a letter under another name.

Sunday, 25th October. After the Sacrament at All-Saints, I took horse for Kingswood; but before I came to Lawrence-Hill, my horse fell, and attempting to rise again, fell down upon me. One or two women ran out of a neighbouring house, and when I rose helped me in. I adore the wisdom of God. In this house were three persons, who began to run well; but Satan had hindered them: but they resolved to set out again; and not one of them has looked back since.

Notwithstanding this delay, I got to Kingswood by two. The words God enabled me to speak there, and afterwards at Bristol, (so I must express myself still, for I dare not ascribe them to my own wisdom,) were as a hammer and a flame: and the same blessing we found at the meeting of the Society; but more abundantly at the Love-feast which followed. I remember nothing like it for many months: a cry was heard from one end of the congregation to the other; not of grief, but of overflowing joy and love. "O continue forth thy loving kindness unto them that know thee; and thy mercy to them that are true of heart!"

The great comfort I found, both in public and private, almost every day of the ensuing week, I apprehend was to prepare me for what followed; a short account of which I sent to London soon after, in a letter, the copy of which I have subjoined; although I am sensible there are several circumstances therein which some may set down for mere enthusiasm and extravagance.

“DEAR BROTHER,

“All last week I found hanging upon me the effects of a violent cold I had contracted in Wales; not, I think, (as Mr. Turner and Walcam supposed,) by lying in a damp bed at St. Bride’s; but rather by riding continually in the cold and wet nights, and preaching immediately after. But I believed it would pass off, and so took little notice of it until Friday morning: I then found myself exceeding sick; and as I walked to Baptist-Mills, (to pray with Susanna Basil, who was ill of a fever,) felt the wind pierce me, as it were, through. At my return, I found myself something better; only I could not eat any thing at all: yet I felt no want of strength at the hour of intercession, nor at six in the evening, while I was opening and applying those words: ‘Sun, stand thou still in Gibeon; and thou Moon in the valley of Ajalon.’ I was afterwards refreshed, and slept well; so that I apprehended no farther disorder, but rose in the morning as usual, and declared, with a strong voice and enlarged heart, ‘Neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith that worketh by love.’ About two in the afternoon, just as I was set down to dinner, a shivering came upon me, and a little pain in my back, but no sickness at all, so that I eat a little; and then growing warm, went to see some that were sick. Finding myself worse, about four, I would willingly have laid down; but having promised to see Mrs. G——, who had been out of order for some days, I went thither first, and thence to Weaver’s Hall. A man gave me a token for good as I went along: ‘Aye,’ said he, ‘he will be a martyr too by and by.’ The Scripture I enforced was, ‘My little children, these things I write unto you, that ye sin not. But if any man sin, we have an advocate with

the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.' I found no want, either of inward or outward strength; but afterwards, finding my fever increased, I called on Dr. Middleton. By his advice, I went home and took my bed; a strange thing to me who had not kept my bed a day (for five and thirty years) ever since I had the small-pox. I immediately fell into a profuse sweat, which continued until one or two in the morning. God then gave me refreshing sleep, and afterwards such tranquillity of mind, that this day, Sunday, November 1, seemed the shortest day to me I had ever known in my life."

I think a little circumstance ought not to be omitted, although I know there may be an ill construction put upon it. Those words were now so strongly impressed upon my mind, that for a considerable time I could not put them out of my thoughts: "Blessed is the man that provideth for the poor and needy; the Lord shall deliver him in the time of trouble. The Lord shall strengthen him when he lieth sick upon his bed: make thou all his bed in his sickness."

On Sunday night likewise I slept well, and was easy all Monday morning. But about three in the afternoon the shivering returned much more violent than before. It continued until I was put to bed; I was then immediately as in a fiery furnace: in a little space I began sweating; but the sweating seemed to increase rather than allay the burning heat. Thus I remained till about eight o'clock; when I suddenly awaked out of a kind of doze, in such a sort of disorder (whether of body or mind or both) as I know not how to describe. My heart and lungs and all that was within me, and my soul too, seemed to be in perfect uproar;

but I cried unto the Lord in my trouble, and He delivered me out of my distress.

I continued in a moderate sweat till near midnight, and then slept pretty well till morning. On Tuesday, November 3, about noon, I was removed to Mr. Hooper's: here I enjoyed a blessed calm for several hours, the fit not returning till six in the evening, and then in such a manner as I never heard or read of. I had a quick pulse, attended with violent heat; but no pain, either in my head, or back, or limbs; no sickness, no stitch, no thirst. Surely God is a present help in time of trouble! and he does "make all my bed in my sickness."

Wednesday 4th. Many of our brethren agreed to seek God to-day by fasting and prayer. About twelve my fever began to rage; at two I dozed a little, and suddenly awaked in such a disorder (only more violent) as that on Monday. The silver cord appeared to be just then loosing, and the wheel breaking at the cistern; the blood whirled to and fro, as if it would immediately force its way through all its vessels, especially in the breast; and excessive burning heat parched up my whole body, both within and without. About three, in a moment, the commotion ceased, the heat was over, and the pain gone; soon after it made another attack, but not near so violent as the former: this lasted till half-past four, and then vanished at once: I grew better and better till nine; then I fell asleep, and scarce awaked at all till morning.

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